

CONSTANCE:

A NOVEL.

THE FIRST LITERARY ATTEMPT OF

A YOUNG LADY.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

ON MY STRAIN
PERHAPS SOME COLD FASTIDIOUS JUDGE
CASTS A DISDAINFUL EYE, AND CALLS MY TOIL,
AND CALLS THE LOVE AND BEAUTY WHICH I SING
THE DREAM OF FOLLY. AKENSIDE.



VOLUME IV.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED AT THE LITHOGRAPHIC PRESS,

F O R

THOMAS HOOKHAM, AT HIS CIRCULATING LIBRARY,
NEW BOND-STREET, CORNER OF BRUTON-STREET.

MDCCLXXXV.



C O N S T A N C E

C H A P. I.

M E E T I N G.

THE doom of Sir Edward Fitzarthur's daughter was now, to the preclusion of all hope, fixed, and it appeared that the fostering hand of maternal tenderness had reared beauty and virtue for the gratification of a man who by his conduct had renounced his title even to the indiscriminated dispensations of providential bounty.

So compulsory a marriage, the appeal to her own ideas of right and wrong declared not valid; but yet she had given her consent to it; she had chosen it as an alternative; she had promised to maintain herself Lord Farnford's wife, and she determined to adhere to her word. To this the excess of her wretchedness also inclined her; she felt so completely miserable, that she hoped her disease would prove its own cure; and so far was she from

wishing any alleviation of that which could not radically be removed, that she preferred aggravating all the ills she suffered, and desired nothing but the accumulation of misfortune to crush her.

There was only one consideration that drew her attention from the horror of being married to the man she hated, and this respected Lord Calorne : she was awake to resentment, but it was a resentment so mingled with grief that it rather deserved the name of sorrow for the peccability of human nature ; nevertheless she determined to accuse him courageously, and to convince him that sensibility does not necessarily imply weakness of mind.

But so little do we know of our own hearts, so unable are we to govern even that small territory, and so much do we err in the ideas of our power, that we are only safe from presumption by making our judgment passive. All her efforts fell short of inspiring her with fortitude, and when she was at Mr. Gaynham's door, she was worse prepared to see Lady Harriet than when she set out. Agitated in a thousand ways, she flew up stairs without speaking a word, but then her courage quite failed her, and she stood hesitating whether she had not better send a servant into the dressing-room to announce her return. It happened that, at this instant, Lady Harriet opened the door, and was accidentally coming out, when seeing Constance, she said with an astonishing calmness, " My dear, I did not know " you were come home—why do you stand there ?

Trembling,

Trembling, pale, and breathless, she answered,—
‘ I am this moment come, and I was afraid’——
her voice dropt, and Lady Harriet, eagerly asking
what was the matter, led her to the nearest chair,
and repeated her entreaties to know what had disturb-
ed her ; but Constance’s breath grew shorter, and
she could not satisfy her. “ Something has frightened
“ you,” said her ladyship, “ you shall have some
“ drops, and you will be better.” This medicine
did not afford her relief comparable to that of tears,
which flowed now abundantly, and which the
amazement her appearance and agitation had caused,
nearly disabled Lady Harriet from attempting to
stop.

Mr. Gaynham and his wife were going to break-
fast when Constance arrived : he now entered the
room, and, surprized at seeing her, cried “ So,
“ Miss Fitzarthur ? what my run-away madam
“ returned at last ?—but what is the matter ?—
“ why is she in tears ?—has any thing happened ?”
“ I know no more,” replied Lady Harriet, “ than
“ you do ; she is just come in, and I have not been
“ able to get a word from her.” “ Something has
“ shocked her,” said Mr. Gaynham, “ perhaps my
“ aunt is ill : whatever it is, our being too eager
“ can only retard her recovery, let her alone and
“ she will grow calm.”

Constance, now exerting herself to the utmost,
said to Lady Harriet, who sat by her holding one
of her hands ; ‘ I am afraid you have been very

“ much alarmed at my absence.” “ ‘Till yesterday
“ morning,” she answered, “ we were very uneasy,
“ owing to a strange blunder at Mrs. Gayn-
“ ham’s ; she sent to us some little time after you
“ got to her, to let us know you would sleep at
“ her house, and that you would be here yesterday
“ noon ; my brother called in after this message
“ came, and wishing to speak to you, sent to Port-
“ man-square to desire you would either see him
“ there or return to breakfast with us. There
“ was, to our great surprize, only one servant in
“ the house, she said my aunt was gone to her new
“ house, and our man prudently went on without
“ coming home : by some unaccountable mistake
“ my aunt’s people told him you were not there,
“ and Mrs. Gaynham was gone to bed, very much
“ fatigued with her removal. This, as you may
“ imagine, frightened us, and Lord Calorne set out
“ immediately to know if it could possibly be true :
“ all of the servants that he saw persisted in saying
“ that you were not there, and that you had not
“ been there, and none of them chose to wake
“ their mistress : they were so confident, that he
“ could not doubt but some accident had befallen
“ you, or that you had gone elsewhere ; he came
“ here to inquire if you were arrived, and then set
“ out, determined to visit every place where there
“ was the least chance of finding you. When your
“ message came yesterday morning, we were con-
“ vinced that Mrs. Gaynham’s servants were
“ wrong,

“ wrong, and I instantly sent to tell him so: I
“ have not seen him since; but I dare say he will be
“ here soon; and now pray let me know why
“ you are so uneasy, for I am sure by your looks
“ you have been made unhappy?”

She could make no other answer than, —“ I was
“ afraid you would be very anxious, but’——
“ Well, well,” said Mr. Gaynham, “ I am glad
“ to find that was the cause, for I feared some-
“ thing worse: it is over now, we are extremely
“ happy to see our sister elect again: come dry
“ up your tears, and behave like a good girl; this
“ is not a day of sorrow. My wife began to tease
“ herself with supposing that you might not be here
“ in time, for Mrs. Gaynham’s man yesterday said
“ vaguely that you would come in the forenoon;
“ but I know your punctuality and took on myself
“ to be responsible for your returning before eleven
“ o’clock.”

Lady Harriet, believing Mr. Gaynham had attributed this extraordinary affection to its proper cause, joined with him in endeavouring to restore Constance’s spirits; they pressed her to sit down to breakfast with them, but on her saying she could not eat, her ladyship advised her getting ready, as Lord Calorne would perhaps be there in a few minutes. “ You have brought your clothes again
“ I imagine,” said she, “ I told your maid to be
“ quite ready for you; and in order to dispatch,

“ if you please, call mine to your assistance, I dress first, that you might have her.”

These effusions of joy and friendship nearly overpowered Constance, who sat leaning on her elbow, and covered her face with her handkerchief. She paid no attention to Lady Harriet's proposal, nor made any reply, and both Mr. Gaynham and his wife grew more alarmed: “ I am sure,” said the latter, “ there is something yet undiscovered; but “ I think my brother knocks at the door, he will, “ I hope, remove or explain her agitation: I never “ saw any thing like it—she trembles all over!” “ Go and meet Lord Calorne,” said Mr. Gaynham, “ it may be the servants have told him she is come; “ do you be the bearer of the good news.” She was flying across the room on this agreeable errand, when Constance rising, and catching hold of her gown, cried, ‘ Dear madam, do not let me see him, ‘ it is—it is’—— “ What!” replied Lady Harriet, “ not see my brother?” ‘ No,’ said she, ‘ I cannot; it is on his account I am unhappy.’ “ Go,” said Mr. Gaynham, laughing at her, “ never mind her Harriet. How can you make “ such a request Miss Fitzarthur?—I am sure you “ would not use him so ill.” ‘ If he comes,’ rejoined Constance, while his sister was listening at the door for him, ‘ I must leave the room; he cannot “ wish to see me, and you do not know what you “ do.’ “ Simpleton,” replied Mr. Gaynham, “ your spirits are hurried; recollect yourself, and “ you

“ you may face him ; he is not so very terrible.”

Lord Calorne had now ascended the stairs, and Lady Harriet, going out to meet him, pulled the door after her, and held it in her hand to prevent his rushing in. Constance, ready to drop at the sound of his voice, heard him say eagerly :—

“ What is to be done, Harriet ? I can get no intelligence of her. I have been to every place where there was any chance of finding her : I am distracted !” “ Patience, good brother,” she replied.—“ Can you preach patience ?” interrupted he, “ there is but one comfort for me ; I am sure Farnford has not got her : I am told he was married last night, and I saw him just now at a distance ; I cannot learn to whom he is married ; but thank Heaven she is safe from him !” “ If you were not so eager,” said Lady Harriet, “ I would tell you news of her ; but I thought you had long before this been easy ; we sent as soon as we heard she was at my aunt’s : How long is it since you were at home ?” “ I have not been at home,” he answered, “ since I saw you ; nor have I eaten, slept, or remained an hour in the same place : but is she still at Mrs. Gaynham’s ?” “ No,” replied his sister, “ if you will promise to keep your joy within bounds, you shall see her ; she is in this room.” Not a syllable more passed, Lady Harriet quitted her hold of the door, and Lord Calorne bounced in.

During this conversation, Constance's increasing perturbation attracted Mr. Gaynham's serious attention; but when she found that Lord Calorne was on the point of entering, she rose from her seat and would have gone out at another door, had not Mr. Gaynham stopped her, asking her if she was crazy; thus compelled to stay, she uttered in a faint voice; ' If I must endure this trial, Great God support me !' and sunk down on the sofa. At that instant his lordship sprang across the room, and catching her in his arms, would have imprinted the kiss of welcome on her lips, when perceiving her pale, trembling, dejected, and reluctant, he started back, and anxiously inquired whether she was ill, or what had occasioned the manifest alteration in her looks; which almost unanswerable query Mr. Gaynham replied to, by saying he believed his lordship was the cause, that her spirits were too much hurried, and that it would have been better if she had come home the evening before, but that he did not doubt she would recover soon. Neither Lord Calorne nor his sister seemed perfectly satisfied; yet, as they could not imagine any thing very terrible had happened, their greatest concern was lest she should be too much affected to behave with composure in church.

C H A P. II.

A C Q U I T T A L.

LORD Farnford's prophecy respecting Lord Calorne's conduct and designs now recurring to her remembrance, she saw to remain passive was criminal : to take the necessary part, where her passions were so interested, was extremely difficult ; yet, determined to make every other consideration cede to that of duty, she tried to speak, but was unable to raise her voice : she began to suspect that all those present with her were engaged in the plot against her, as she had been so compelled to meet Lord Calorne, and he had continued his deceit to the last hour ; and resentment reanimated her livid countenance. This change was ascribed to the subsiding of those emotions which had so alarmingly agitated her, and her lover's joy at this prospect of recovery was not to be restrained.

Lady Harriet again urged her retiring to dress, which Lord Calorne opposed, protesting he would not lose sight of her till he had a right to seek her every where ; and chusing rather that she should.

go to church in her mourning dishabille than that she should quit the room. "I am sure," said he, "she will wave all punctilio; otherwise I must go home to dress, for I have not had my clothes off since I saw you, nor should I, I believe, for a month, if I had not found her. We shall be very shabby wedding folks; but few will see us, and fewer still know us; therefore, Mr. Gaynham, if you will order your coach, that will take us all together. If we had a mind to sport a coronet, there was, I saw, near your door, an earl's coach with an F, and it seemed to be in for a waiting job: we might borrow it, what say you my love?—shall you and I play the part of an earl and countess?" Poor Constance, who too well knew for whom the coach waited, made no answer to this jesting query; and Lord Calorne, seeing her still extremely distressed, turned to Mr. Gaynham, and said, "Indeed, I am afraid, if we delay any longer, she will not be able to support herself; I could not have imagined she would have been so affected or I would not have thought of obliging her to go to church: I am dreadfully apprehensive she will not be able to stand it: why she looks like a corpse!" "Take no notice of her," Mr. Gaynham replied, "you had better send one of the men to the church, to desire that you may not be made to wait; my carriage is at your service, and I dare say ready by this time, for I

"told

“told them to be here soon after eleven.” “Then try if you can encourage her,” said Lord Calorne, “and I will give the message to your servant.”

He went across the room to ring the bell, when exerting herself to break a silence in which she could no longer think herself justified, she desired him to stop and hear her. Imagining that she had some directions to give, or some wish to express, he returned, and stood before her. ‘My lord,’ said she, ‘what are you doing?—what new insult do you intend me?—do you mean to carry your deceit to the altar, and there refuse me?—what advantage can result to you from exposing me?’

His Lordship, his sister, and Mr. Gaynham, stared at each other, and at her; and anger giving her the strength she required, she continued,—You have deceived me, my Lord, basely deceived me; but you are yourself the dupe of your artifice: do not add insult to cruelty. Perhaps you have gone thus far to find out whether I knew your intentions. I have, thank Heaven, discovered them sufficiently, and have escaped you.

Lord Calorne, whose real or feigned astonishment seemed to have for some time deprived him of the power of speech, now warmly desired an explanation of what she had said: to yourself look, she replied, for an explanation: when I tell you you can not intend marrying me, though you have till now supported the appearance: you think I am a weak infatuated creature, and a proper subject for —. O

wicked Lord Calorne : I must speak : but you need no accuser.

He then, in the most solemn manner, declared that he did not understand her, and looked to his sister for information : she seemed as much to seek as he. Mr. Gaynham said something had affected her senses, and gotten possession of her mind ; and proposed their leaving her with Lady Harriet, that she might, as probably she would do, recover, if undisturbed.—No, Sir, said Constance, it is no delirium : if you and Lady Harriet are really ignorant of what I mean, I pity the distress you must undergo when you hear how cruelly Lord Calorne has treated one to whom you have shewn such friendship : time alone must prove whether his Lordship intrusted his sister with his designs : till I am satisfied on this head, I am sure she will excuse my absence from this house, as I receive some new insult every moment I stay where Lord Calorne is.—Saying these words she rose and rang the bell.—For Heaven's sake, cried his Lordship, tell me what you mean, Miss Fitzarthur?—Can it give you any pleasure, she replied, to hear your perfidy repeated ? or do you think me so uninterested as to be able to do it ?

The servant now obeyed the bell, and Constance, to the surprize of all, told him to call the carriage up, for she was coming immediately : then, standing with her back towards Lord Calorne, not daring to trust her eyes, she, in a voice that too plainly

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bespoke her feelings, said to Lady Harriet, For the many favours I have received here, accept my best thanks : I hope you are, Madam, as ignorant of your brother's designs as you appear to be ; if you are, you will feel for me, and allow me still a place in your friendship.—My dear, Miss Fitzarthur, answered Lady Harriet, I cannot suffer you to leave us under an error : somebody has imposed on you : I must insist on your explaining yourself : believe me I am wholly ignorant of any insult intended you : my brother cannot deceive you : come, sit down, be calm, and suffer us to set any mistake right.

You may endeavour to *persuade* me, I am imposed on, said Constance, but you cannot *convince* me of it : I cannot stay here : perhaps, when I am gone, your brother will satisfy you.

Lord Calorne could no longer bear his situation ; therefore stifling, at well as he could, the resentment which either innocence or disappointment occasioned, he took her hands, and making her sit down, peremptorily declared she should not stir, till she had explained what he had said, or referred him to some one able to do it.—Of what is it, he asked, that you suspect me ? what insult have I ever offered you ? what deceit have I practised on you ? and what is your meaning by asking me if I intended to refuse you at the altar ?

She now shook universally ; and he, seeing her emotion, said more gently,—It has been my misfor

fortune to be often misrepresented to you ; but be assured whatever imputations may be brought against me I can clear myself from, as I have hitherto done : —do not deny me the privilege of exculpating myself.—Consider, my very dear Miss Fitzarthur, the connection between us, and, as you hope it shall produce happiness to us, enable me to remove every impediment to it.—If, replied Constance, you are innocent, what will become of me ?—I am the most wretched being on earth ; but if, as I can hardly doubt, you have sought to make me miserable I tremble for you.

Good God ! interrupted Lord Calorne, can you for a moment believe me capable of harbouring such a thought ? but tell me, I conjure you, how I intended to bring this about : you say I have insulted you and deceived you ; tell me how ; and you intimate that I meant to refuse you at the altar ; now I insist on an explanation of these three charges, and on knowing your author.—My Lord, she replied, summoning all her fortitude, and turning her eyes from his, a few words will explain the whole : you are married.

Upon my life, returned he, I began to suspect this was it. Well, my dear Madam, I am glad it is nothing worse ; we shall soon set this strait : I was afraid it would reach you, but do not be alarmed. Is this my greatest crime ? if it is, I may say there is no remaining impediment to my claim-
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ing you. Will you give me a proof of your confidence in me by resting satisfied with my assurance that I *can* explain this? and allow me to defer it till I have married *you*: my other wife will be very happy to be introduced to you: You know I told you Miss Ecklow was your rival.—‘Oh, what men dare do! what men can do! what men will do!’ exclaimed Constance:---I should deserve infamy if I could so court it. That you should have married Miss Ecklow is not in itself a crime; but that you should have imposed on me is horrid villainy.

But, said he, tell me what is the incontrovertable evidence you have of this fact.—Such evidence, she answered, as I dared not reject: such as inclines me rather to doubt your protestations than the proofs I have received: of this be assured that, had the smallest space been left for incredulity, I had acquitted you; but I could not refuse the testimony of my eyes and ears: however, your Lordship, I perceive, does not deny it: you are right, for it could answer no end; I was driven to desperation, my doom is fixed.

He smiled at her while she was speaking, for her countenance never so strongly indicated her love for him, though it expressed resentment and grief. Lady Harriet and Mr. Gaynham seemed evidently in the secret, and begged her only to attend to Lord Carlone’s account of this matter.—I will hear him,
said

said she, but he must not expect me to pay much credit to him : he who did not abhor such guilt will not scruple or be at a loss to palliate it. O fye ! Miss Fitzarthur, he cried, do not let us talk of *guilt* :---why consider we have but one soul : there is nothing like guilt in this affair, upon my honour ; and I pledge myself to convince you immediately that you are indeed the person deceived ; but it is in thinking ill of me. I know from what the report originated ; and, however difficult to prove a negative may be, in this instance I hold it possible.

Stay, said Constance ; do not misunderstand me ; it is not from report that I had my information : the evidence I yielded to was that of your own hand-writing.—My own hand-writing ! he repeated : beware, my Constantia ; that once imposed on you before : I never by my own hand-writing acknowledged that I was married.—Not that you *were* married, said she, but you mentioned your *intended* marriage.—Oh, he rejoined, I guess what you might have seen ; but how the duce could you get at it ? upon my word, if this were the beginning of our amour, I should, from the pains you have taken, draw an inference that would make me supremely vain.——I took no pains, replied Constance ; the subject was traced to its source by one who wished me to believe it, and by convincing me of it, saved me from the ruin prepared for me.

O Miss

O Miss Fitzarthur, interposed Mr. Gaynham, this is too much to say: I am sure you were acquainted with the worst of my brother's intentions against you.—You have been imposed on indeed, Madam, said Lord Calorne: allow me, for seriously we shall be too late, but the same degree of credit you have given to this report, and I will convince you that, however cautious you have been, the judgment you formed of me was too hasty.—I am not married, nor can I ever marry any other woman but you: Miss Ecklow is at this moment the wife of Colonel Derville. It is true, that, till the commencement of the ceremony, I appeared at her request, as her intended husband, and then, by an artifice which, at some other time, I will explain to you, the Colonel took my place, and was married to her. The evidence of my hand-writing was, I imagine, a note sent to Dr. ———, appointing the hour; this was my writing, but it proves nothing; for though I took on myself all the preparation, and went to and returned from church with Miss Ecklow, it was only for the purpose of favouring Derville, and removing his difficulties. If this assurance does not satisfy you, I will write to him and his wife, and get an attestation of it from them: you must tell me who was so solicitous to impose on you, when we come back, for it is high time we were set out, and you can no way repair the injury you have done me, but by putting it
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immediately out of the power of impertinence and calumny to make either of us unhappy.

He paused, expecting her reply; but the weight of her misfortunes was now much too great to leave her the ability to speak: she believed, nay, she could not doubt what he had said to be true; and she had, though innocently, injured him beyond reparation: she dreaded his being made acquainted with the irremovable obstacle to all their hopes, and was tortured by reflecting on what she had done.—Wholly unable to inform him of it, yet convinced of the necessity of doing it, and half choaked with the contending passions of her bosom, he had just seated himself by her, and then thrown his arm round her to support her, when raising her eyes, and looking stedfastly at him, she exclaimed, **Good Heaven!** what have I done? and reclining her head on his shoulder, became insensible to her affliction.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

REVELATION.

THE joy which the rectifying what was by all, excepting Constance, considered as an unimportant mistake, was in some measure abated by its severe effects on her. Lord Calorne now repented that he had not more cautiously convinced her of her error, yet he had reason to be pleased with this proof of her belief of him: his sister and Mr. Gaynham, though alarmed for her, were so thoroughly convinced that her return to life would be a return to happiness, that their solicitude extended no farther than restoring to her the use of her faculties; little suspecting that the only situation in which she could escape an aggravation of her sufferings, was that she was then in.

Lord Calorne watched her with the tenderest and most impatient assiduity, and saw her gradually recover, with all the rapture of a man who depended on her restoration for more than his existence: he waited for the smile which should indicate that she was happy in being undeceived, and was astonished when he saw that, in proportion to the increase of
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animation, her emotion increased. Lady Harriet thought this the consequence of her being too greatly surprized, but they could afford her little time to perfect her recovery: it was considerably past eleven o'clock, the carriage was at the door, his Lordship cautiously reminded her, and his sister took up her cloak.

She rose, as if in compliance with the admonition, and going towards Lady Harriet, in an agony of grief not to be described, she threw herself on her neck. Lady Harriet, though so much amazed as to be almost incapacitated from affording her any relief, did what she could to encourage her: she, as well as Mr. Gaynham, imagined it might be excessive timidity, and, hinting this to Lord Calorne, advised his leaving her for a few minutes: he did not concur in their opinion: he said he was certain there was some latent cause of this extraordinary effect; and, as perhaps she would reveal it to Lady Harriet, if she were alone with her, he and Mr. Gaynham would retire.—I cannot stay alone with her, Lady Harriet answered; if there should be any thing very terrible, I shall do her no good.

Their suspicions and apprehensions continued increasing; and they joined in urging her in the strongest terms, to disclose the occasion of what they had been witnesses to: Lord Calorne assuring her nothing could so much distress him as her present situation, and endeavouring to raise her spirits, by rallying her for being afraid of him.

In

In such a state of mind, had her resolution been ever so strong, it was impossible for her to make what she had to say intelligible: she therefore begged to have a few minutes allowed her, and, to detach herself from objects which rendered her feelings yet more poignant, went into the next room, where, by every means in her power, she strove to prepare herself for the shock she must receive and give. She considered the new duty incumbent on her with respect to Lord Farnford, the inevitable necessity of telling Lord Calorne how entirely his hopes were blasted, and that every moment she suffered him to continue in his error, was increasing the injury. These recollections determined her, whatever pangs it might cost her, to inform him of the sacrifice she had been forced to make; but in what terms to do it, or how to soften the blow, she had neither courage nor calmness to consider. At length a spark of fortitude darted into her mind: she took advantage of it, and with no more real resolution than when she quitted the room, returned to it: she could not preface the discovery she had to make, for she did not dare to allow her fears the least interval to strengthen, fully aware that they were already more than sufficiently potent: she was just going to speak, when raising her eyes, she met those of Lord Calorne, and was awed into silence by the terror and anxiety imprinted on his countenance. He perceived he had confused her, and again turned from her: no one spoke; all was
doubt

doubt, tremor, and suspense: she dropped on a chair, and his Lordship repeated his sollicitation to know what it was that so astonishingly agitated her. —If, said he, it is your fear of giving me pain that keeps you silent, you have nothing to apprehend: no misfortune can touch me that does not separate us, and that, I hope, is next to impossible. Allow me to participate your feelings, they will be lightened by it, consider, we are to share each other's pains as well as pleasures, and you do not know that it is out of my power to relieve; if it is, let me have the pleasure of administering what consolation the sincerest love and the tenderest pity can bestow. Indeed, Miss Fitzarthur, it is unkind to keep me in such suspense: you have no idea of my love for you, if you think I can bear it.—Tell me, is it any thing that has happened since I saw you?—Constance answered, Yes.—Can I any way be of service to you? is it concern for yourself or for another?—For both, said she.—Have you any reason to wish our marriage deferred?—If you have, speak, for it would be unpardonable cruelty to make your tranquillity the price of my gratification surely you can have no distrust of me: tell me if you have?

The tears now again forced a passage, and sobbing, she replied, I have no doubt, no distrust: I am convinced; but could I reject such proofs as I had? O acquit me, say I was weak, or any thing excepting—— My dear, interrupted Lady

Lady Harriet, why should you so unreasonably lament a circumstance entirely passed, and which can have no bad consequence? I will answer for my brother, that he acquits you; any body might have been so imposed on. Can it be regret for having suspected him, that gives you all this uneasiness?—O no, said Constance, it is my own weakness, my own folly, that I regret: my Lord, I have made you and myself miserable: you will reproach me, bitterly reproach me: I am miserable: that is all I have to plead: forgive me: I was driven to it.—Her utterance was now choaked, and her hearers were left in a state of still more painful uncertainty than before.

At this critical instant the door was opened, and Lord Farnford announced: as he did not visit at the house, his coming was, to all but one, matter of surprize: and Mr. Gaynham, supposing his business might be with him, was going out of the room, when the Earl entered it: his name had added terror to his wife's other sufferings, and when he appeared, she, unconscious of what she did, threw herself into Lord Calorne's arms.

This interruption increased the original confusion: very little attention was for some moments paid to the visitor, whose eyes were directed towards Constance, and whose looks expressed some dissatisfaction at the situation he had found her in: he seated himself by her, and taking one of her hands,
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with a degree of familiarity astonishing to the rest of the company, asked her, how she did.

Lord Calorne, not very much delighted with his rival's being so near her, advised her to change seats with Lady Harriet that her back might be towards the light, she would have risen; but the Earl keeping her hand, and looking at Lord Calorne, said, I beg your Lordship's pardon; my business is with this Lady, and I must speak with her in private. Mrs. Stavenell has called on you, my dear, and has sent me to you; may I communicate her message in another room?—Any thing, replied Lord Calorne, that you will please to say in this room I am sure Miss Fitzarthur will hear, and I am equally certain that she will not quit it with you. Are you indeed? said he; then my opinion of her is better than your's, for I cannot think she will refuse me.—I am sorry; Lord Calorne rejoined, to advert to what should now be forgotten; but, as you have once given Miss Fitzarthur reason to fear you, I will venture in her name to refuse you. I will take no refusal, said her husband, but from herself: will you, Madam, refuse me?

She rose, without saying a word, while her lover, Mr. Gaynham, and Lady Harriet looked at each other, unable to comprehend this extraordinary compliance; till Lord Calorne's interest in what passed getting the better of his amazement,
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he stopped Constance, and hastily asked her if she knew what she was doing. Yes, she answered I dare not refuse him. Dare not? he repeated: what right has he over you?---my life shall protect you.

There seems, said Lord Farnford, to be some wonderful misapprehension in this business: can my right be doubted?---I fancy I am come in very opportunely to explain a mystery, but I must speak to her first.---*Here* If you please, replied Lord Calorne; you must not, you shall not take her out of my sight; your pretended authority can be founded only in your being made a messenger to her, and it must give way to mine: I suspect this is an artifice to detain us:---any business you have with her, you shall see her on after to-day, she is just now particularly engaged, and is this moment going out.-----Is she indeed! the Earl asked, with whom might she be going?---With me, said Lord Calorne.---If I do not flatter myself, returned Lord Farnford, she will chuse rather to go with me:---but it is possible, Madam, that it falls to my lot to disclose what you came hither purposely to reveal?---let me speak to you, and know how much of your story remains for me to tell.

Lord Calorne, fired by this importunity, answered,---Sir, she shall not leave the room with you:---if she is not capable of exercising her own judgment, and you see she is not, mine ought to

supply the deficiency :—you have long lost all title to her confidence.—Sit down, Madam, said he to Constance, while I am alive you shall not go with him.—I wave my request, replied Lord Farnford, smiling maliciously, yet I will prove to your satisfaction that I had some right to expect it should be complied with.—My wish to speak to this lady in private, arose from a desire to spare her all needless uneasiness, but, since this is prohibited, I am warranted in complaining of your injustice : as *Miss Fitzarthur*, I own I had no claim to her compliance : as *Lady Farnford*, all who know me will acknowledge I was not absurd in expecting it.

Eyes and hands were elevated with wonder, while Lord Calorne, reddening with anger, and coming up to his opponent, said, Why you will not give me such a proof of your having lost your senses as to say Miss Fitzarthur is Lady Farnford?—No, replied her husband, affecting the utmost calmness, I am not so mad as to assert, that the same person can be two ; all that I contend for is that she, who was Miss Fitzarthur, is this morning Countess of Farnford and my wife :—and so, added he, turning round to Constance, who more than half dead had thrown herself into a chair behind him, if your Ladyship is ready to go home,—I believe your carriage waits.

After a pause of a few seconds, during which the attention of every one was directed to Constance,

Lord

Lord Calorne, starting from sleep, said,—I will not believe it,—'tis absolutely impossible, and then addressing himself to Mr. Gaynham: He is mad, or he was drunk last night, and has not recovered it; I wish my sister would take her out of the room;—it is very unfit for her to be here now: his impertinence effectually has detained us, and I suppose it will be no easy matter to get rid of him.—This he said in a voice so low that only Mr. Gaynham heard him; he spoke to Lady Harriet, and she, going towards Constance, advised her to go up stairs with her.—Lord Farnford hearing this, said to Lady Harriet,—First, Madam, if you please, let it be proved that she is at liberty to follow your kind suggestion.—I should be very happy to spare Lady Farnford's being present at this denouement; but perhaps nothing less than her own voice will convince Lord Calorne.—And that, returned Lord Calorne, if it is possible that she can, while I am here to defend her, be under any apprehension from you, will not be sufficient.—Then trust your eyes, rejoined the Earl, stripping off Constance's glove, and shewing her ring:—now believe me, or say what farther proof you require, I am ready to give it you.—Miss Fitzarthur, said Lord Calorne, you must immediately deny this, or I must believe, if such treachery is possible, that you have deceived me: speak; say you are not his wife, and nothing shall shake my confidence in you.

Difficult as it was for her to utter a word, she answered,—I cannot deny it; I am his wife; but ———. It is enough, interrupted Lord Gallorné. I ask no farther information. I have been convinced that no ties can bind those who have not a principle within to restrain them; but you, Madam, I thought so incapable of any thing that was not more than strictly right, that nothing less than this proof should have prevailed on me to think of you as I now do: yet let me not judge too hardly: Lord Farnford, you have compelled her to this marriage? her consent has never been given to it: I hold it, Sir, the indispensable duty of men reciprocally to bear injuries; but these are injuries of such magnitude, and so severely felt, as to require more than humanity to bear them: this, which you have done me, is such: it is true, there is nothing in this world that can make me any reparation: but my temper will not permit you to enjoy the fruits of such unexampled villany: one of us must be removed; and if it is in your nature to do a friendly action, your taking from me an existence which you have rendered not only worthless but intolerable, would be so: I must therefore demand the only satisfaction you can make me?

When your Lordship has made it appear, replied the Earl, that I had not Lady Farnford's consent, I will wait on you: her consent was not wanting; she gave it me, and when I was once

and leave her at li-

berty to perform an engagement I now find she was under to you, at the very moment when I was going to quit the house, she, on her knees, begged me to return: could I divine that she was so attached to you as to make her becoming my wife criminal?

Would you persuade Lord Calorne, interrupted Constance, that I voluntarily consented to this marriage? 'tis true, you had my consent; but Heaven, to which I appeal, knows how it was extorted from me. Lord Calorne I have been imposed on. I did every thing to extricate myself, and keep my promise to you: had you been at home yesterday you would have been convinced of it; you would have believed that I preferred death to the situation I am now in. If to submit to an inevitable necessity is criminal, I stand condemned; but tell me, was it possible for me, betrayed to his house, detained there by him, persuaded that you had deserted me, and threatened with being carried to a distance from all my friends, entirely at his mercy, without a soul in whom I could confide, excepting one whose power to help me fell short of her wishes and my necessity, was it possible for me to withstand him? 'tis true I did kneel to him, and consented to this abhorred deed: what was the alternative offered me? his post-chaise was waiting at the door, and he protested I should go with him into the country. But why

do I endeavour to clear myself to you? think me still guilty—tell me so—tell me I have deceived you, and kill me with your reproaches.

Her husband, who while she was speaking had walked much disturbed up and down the room, frequently interposing to stop her, would not suffer her to proceed any farther, and in a voice too peremptory to be disregarded, told her his business was with her, and that he insisted on her going home with him immediately.

All Lord Calorne's suspicion of Constance, all resentment of her imagined treachery, now in a moment subsided, and he sunk into a state of stupor, from which he was roused by Lord Farnford's repeating his authoritative command to his scarcely existing wife: he then again demanded the satisfaction he had before required, to which he could get no other reply than,—I must first see Lady Farnford safe home:—and as no opposition was justifiable, he was forced to submit to seeing her taken from him, for the Earl would not suffer her even to speak to Lady Harriet, who was in tears, nor to stay a minute longer; but hurrying her into the coach, ordered it home as fast as possible.

CHAP. IV.

DISCORDANCE.

IN their way to Portman-square not a word passed, and immediately on her entering the house, a succession of fainting fits reduced Constance to such a state as made the consequences of this violence to be apprehended : she was committed to the care of Kitty, and others of the maid-servants were ordered to attend her ; they carried her to her chamber, and laid her on her bed, but it was not till towards the evening that fatal effects were not every instant dreaded : she then revived, and, at Lord Farnford's request, was moved to the next room.

Though it was evident that she was much hurt at the sight of him, and that it was highly proper she should have been left alone to try to rest, he detained her, and indulged himself in a gratification, which none but himself would have chosen, that of the company of a person he had beyond forgiveness injured : he was in oxicated

with the pleasure of calling her his, and his natural vanity and self love dictating to him that the continuance of her dislike was impossible, he teased her with repeating his promises, and with his disgusting consolation : she cried, and made no answer to all he said, till, in a tone of very ill-timed raillery, he told her, that he was not discouraged by her coolness, for that he was satisfied they should the next day be very good friends. Surprise at this confident assurance awakened her attention : her tears stopped, and she replied,—You have deceived yourself extremely, if you think I am so easily wrought on : no time can reconcile me to you, or my misfortune in being your wife : do not expect me to change or to dissemble ; I cannot, I will not do it : you have been a monster of cruelty to me : you have separated me from the object of my tenderest affections and my highest esteem ; and you have forced me into a marriage with the man I abhor. Your endeavours have been successful, but of this, Lord Farnford, you may rest assured, that all the pleasure you can derive from your villainy you have already reaped : that I am your wife, may be a restraint on me, but it can never be an impulse. My hatred of you will increase as I contemplate my wretchedness ; and, if it does not please God to afford me shelter in my grave, I will so far condescend, as to request you to let me return to my friends : you have married me : you have made me miserable : you can desire no greater
feli-

felicity, since this is the end you have uniformly aimed at. I never will live with you, if I can by any means avoid it; nor must you be at all surprized, if you find my temper very different from what it has hitherto appeared. You have made me mad: you are the murderer of my peace, and when I am dead, my soul shall cry for vengeance against you, inhuman, barbarous Lord Farnford!

His Lordship's countenance shewed he felt what she had said; and, as if at that moment throwing off all disguise, he candidly owned, that he had been much to blame, that the ardour of his passion had hurried him to an unpardonable excess; but that, as what was passed was irrevocable, he could only by his future conduct manifest his love for her: he told her she must not think of a separation, which he never could hear of, but that, if she would consent to live with him, he would, by every means in his power, endeavour to gain her affection.

This was feeble rhetoric in such a cause, and administered no comfort to Constance's wounded mind: he had deceived her too often, and in the last instance too fatally, to make his promises or even his oaths at all credible, had she been disposed to listen to them; and, under her circumstances, could he have laid the universe at her feet, it had been rejected. Justly excited anger, and uncontrollable grief, alternately occupied her bosom, and he saw all his oratorical endowments fail in their utmost exertion: she was not to be pacified; he had

injured her beyond forgiveness, beyond reparation, and beyond bearing.

They had spent near an hour together, when a servant brought in a note to Lord Farnford, to which, after having read it, he replied, with a forced indifference.—A pretty, coherent, bullying, epistle, truly ! neither addressed nor signed ! I could to be sure, guess by the style whence it comes.—Give my best respects to his Lordship, and tell him I am married and cannot come.

This answer was sufficient to discover the purport of the billet, and revealed to Constance that it was from Lord Calorne : the tears gushed afresh from her eyes, and Lord Farnford, who saw the cause, tried to soothe her by assurances that he would not be provoked to accept a challenge.—God forbid, said she, that I should occasion him to risque his life. What misery have I brought on him ! how happy he might have been had he never known me ! and that he should be so insulted ! so injured ! so robbed ! Oh I cannot bear to think of it.—Then do not think of it, said her insensible husband.—Mrs. Stavenell called here this morning while you were absent, and she desires we will dine with her to-morrow : your cousin has written to her, and gives us no hopes of his being at home yet, so she proposes going into the country in a few days : you have no objection to her invitation, I hope.—Do you imagine, replied Constance, that I can accept invitations ? How can my aunt bear to see me, when she must be sensible that she has contributed

to

to my misfortunes? I have not so much charity: she has been very unkind to me. But, pray, my Lord, ring the bell for Kitty: I can sit up no longer; my head will split: I must go to bed.

And when may I see you again, if I let you go now? said his Lordship.—Never alive, pray Heaven! she answered.—O foolish girl! he rejoined, you must not be so unhappy. I know you have too much good sense to fret long at what is irremediable: you must tell me when I shall see you?—This I will tell you, said she, that unless I am allowed to be the mistress of myself, and to remain alone when and how long I please, I will by some method or other procure a separation from you. I am sure it is possible, for it is reasonable; and I solemnly declare, that if your Lordship presumes to lessen the distance between us, or if you behave to me with any greater degree of familiarity than I permit, or than you would shew to a stranger, should it cost me my worthless life, I will oppose you, and quit your hated house and its treacherous master for ever. Your violence justifies my absenting myself from you, and I insist on your submitting to my refusal: you have found it pleasant to be peremptory, and you must allow me to be so in my turn.

I cannot submit to absolute prohibition, returned Lord Farnford: consider, Madam, I have a right to see you, and I shall have no encouragement to humour you, if you tell me it will be ineffectual. I would advise you to shew a little wit

in your anger, for, depend on it, if I find that you refuse to see me, and admit any one else, even your favourite Calorne, he shall answer for it : *how* you became my wife, matters not ; that you *are* so, is sufficient justification for me ; and whatever sharers I may have in your *heart*, I will have no greater preference *manifested* to any than myself.

Sentiments, cried Constance, exactly fitted to Lord Farnford's mind ! You have associated with the worst part of the world, and your ideas are their's ; but I will not satisfy you on this head : be jealous of me, and kindly kill me : I tell you, and have often told you, I hate you, and I love Lord Calorne : will not that rouse your indignation ? have you no spark of honour in you ? can you patiently hear me say, that I will cherish my love for him ? that my greatest possible felicity would be, to die in his arms ? Good God ! you can stand it, and laugh at me !

I can stand it ;—I can laugh at you ; and I can still love you, he stoically replied, for I know what you can and what you cannot do.—Your passions are disappointed ; but I am sure a little time will calm you.—I will ring for your servant : you may retire if you chuse it.—I shall do myself the honour of making personal inquiries after you, and shall think half an hour's intimation of my intention as much as you can expect.—I am not to be so bullied, my fair lady : we must be better friends.

A small

A small degree of resolution would generally overcome Constance's rage ; for, as her temper was naturally mild, any extraordinary heat soon evaporated, and in the present state of her spirits it was soon exhausted. Lord Farnford's authoritative look and tone, and above all the conviction that he threatened no more than he dared, humbled her, and she descended to intreaty that he would allow her a reasonable time to blunt the acute feeling of her sufferings ; she promised him that she would not encourage her aversion to him, that she would exert herself to oppose her grief, and that she would not purposely incense him, and he, softened by her tears, in return, consented to wait a change in his favour.

Kitty was called, they parted in peace, and Constance, with great difficulty, reached her chamber : her maid then gave her a note which had been sent from Lady Harriet Gaynham, and which she would not trust any other hand to deliver to her.

' Tell me, my dearest, my most unhappy girl, are you irrevocably Lord Farnford's wife ?—cannot your marriage be set aside ?—surely as it was not voluntary it cannot be binding :—it is no marriage.

' If you think any thing of this kind feasible, cannot you come to me ? do not stay with him.

' Write me an answer yourself. I have sent this to your maid that you might not be forced to say what you do not mean : you said somebody in the house was your friend, I conclude she must be.
Adieu.

' H. G.'

CONSTANCE:

Though really so ill as to be scarcely able to support herself, Constance sat down to reply to this request, and, while her tears obliterated the characters, she wrote:

‘ I shall soon be released: my heart is almost broken. My dear Lady Harriet: I dare not think of what you advise: it has pleased God to make me Lord Farnford’s wife, and his wife I am and must continue. I submit, but it is, I own, in the hope that my sufferings will be short. I am at this moment burning with a fever.

‘ Might I see you! you will not come to this horrid house.

‘ All I wish is your brother’s forgiveness: my tears stop me: Adieu. I have no name but

‘ CONSTANCE MATILDA.’

C H A P. V.

F A R E W E L L.

HER maid left her to carry this billet to Lady Harriet’s servant, and at her return found her thrown on the bed in strong convulsions: the agony.

agony of her mind overpowered her, and this appeared the final conflict. Kitty, excessively terrified, rang the bell; a servant came up to know what was the matter, and carrying the news of his Lady's danger to Lord Farnford, he himself came to her.

Medical assistance was sent for, and during this time of delay, his Lordship staid with her, expressing the utmost fury at that which was a natural effect of his violence: after all his endeavours, after the sacrifice of all that a rational being would think valuable, to be baffled by the hand of death, and deprived of his prize in the very moment of victory, was an indignity his haughty mind would not patiently submit to: he sat by her, he looked at her fixedly, while her features and limbs were variously contorted, and then lifting up his hands and eyes, in the rage of disappointment and defeat, he imprecated on his head, the bitterest curses for the precipitation by which he had counteracted himself.

The physician sent for came as soon as possible, and her husband eagerly inquiring his opinion, was answered, that, as being a stranger to her constitution, he could not judge what she might go through, but that, from her appearance and symptoms, it was hardly probable that she could live longer than the morning.

Unsatisfied with what so militated against his wishes, his Lordship ordered another physician to be

be called in, who confirming the opinion of the first, increased Lord Farnford's fury, and in his madness he swore that, if they did not recover her, their lives should answer for her's. They could only assure him, that no endeavours on their part should be wanting, and advised, as her head was dreadfully affected, that she should be kept perfectly quiet, and that nobody should be allowed to speak to her. This and all other conditions that might contribute the least hope of recovering her, he promised should be complied with : the knockers were taken off, the square was laid with straw, strict prohibitions of the least noise were sent through the house, and he had now leisure to reflect on what he had done.

Constance remained in this state till day-light, when she became less agitated : Lord Farnford sat up below stairs, and detained one of the physicians, who visited her every hour, with very little hope ; for, though the convulsion which had seized her grew weaker, her fever increased to a tremendous height, and she was in a perpetual delirium, raving about Lady Harriet, and striving to get up to go to her : the only sensible words she uttered were complaints of great pain in her head, and requests for drink to allay the heat that consumed her.

At noon, Lady Harriet called, expecting to see her ; but hearing from the servants that nobody could be admitted, she sent for Kitty and learnt her danger. Mrs. Stavenell afterwards came, and

was

was very desirous to see her, but Lord Farnford would not suffer it.

Thus, contrary to the expectations of all about her, she lived five days, during which time she had not one moment's sleep: she had only two lucid intervals of any continuance, and she then earnestly prayed that it would please God to release her: On the sixth day she appeared rather better, she was sensible two hours at a time, and slept once for about twenty minutes. This, however flattering, her physicians feared was more a sign of her being exhausted than of amendment, as it was followed by a perfect stupor, in which, though her eyes were open, the greatest testimony of her being alive was a convulsive starting.

She was now so totally insensible that any, if those could be found to whom such a sight was gratifying, who wished it, might without increasing her danger see her, and of this permission her husband availed himself: the physician was present, and pitying Lord Farnford's distress, he endeavoured to prepare him for her death, and to alleviate his sorrow, by saying she would probably go off quietly and without pain: this was no consolation to his lordship; his sorrow was entirely selfish; it was his *own* defeat he lamented, and would willingly have prolonged her misery rather than have lost her. He strictly forbade all mention of a possibility that she would not recover, and vehemently expressing his anger at the contention between death and him-
self

self, he awakened his wife from her torpidity, and she instantly fainted at the sight of him.

It was now a doubt whether he had not completely terminated her miserable existence ; but she was restored, and he promised to be less rash in future. She passed a dreadfully tumultuous night, yet did not seem so much worse the next morning as might have been expected ; she then dozed, and about noon awoke sensible and tranquil. Her physicians saw her, and he who had first attended her staying some time longer, than the other, expressed his doubt to her maid whether any of her symptoms were favourable : this, though spoken in a low voice, she overheard, and beckoning him to her bedside, she said—‘ I am dying ; I know, and I rejoice at it :—tell him I forgive him—he has killed me—I forgive him.—Bid him repent what he has done. I believe for a great while I have not had the use of my reason : it has pleased God now to restore it to me, and I hope it will be continued during the short remainder of my life.—I see death approaching without its t r r o r s, and most gladly will I meet it : tell me, Sir, how long it is probable I may linger ?’

The doctor made no reply ; he was affected with the scene before him ; and, accustomed as he was to visit the bed of sickness and of death, he could not insensibly behold such sufferings and resignation. ‘ Ah !’ said Constance, ‘ you are unwilling to tell me ; you think it a painful task to fix the
‘ end

‘end of my life : thank you for your humanity !
‘but if you knew me you would tell me, that I
‘might rejoice at the approach of my deliverance.
‘Perhaps the time may be too long : perhaps I may
‘remain hours, or even days in this terrible state—
‘O God, thy will be done : I wait thy time : but
‘I beg to hear how long you think my release will
‘be delayed.’

As there could now be no fear of shocking her, and she appeared perfectly composed, he answered, that she might continue, nearly as she was three or four days ; but that the greater probability was, that she would not feel pain more than twenty-four hours : he therefore recommended it to her, if she had any friend that she particularly wished to see, or any affairs to settle, to improve this interval. ‘Thank God for all his mercies !’ she replied, exultingly ; and clapping her hands together, ‘I have
‘no affairs to settle ; but there is a friend whom I
‘much wish to see : and yet it is better not : I could
‘not bear it : and yet, how can I leave the
‘world without it ?’ “I suppose,” said the doctor, “you would wish to see my lord ?” ‘I can forgive him,’ she replied, ‘but I cannot see him :
‘I hope it is not necessary that I should : bid him
‘think of what he has done—I forgive him—O God
‘forgive him !’

She was now so exhausted as to be unable to say any more, and her physician was quitting her bedside, when, by her making a motion with her hand, he

he perceived she had still something which she was desirous to communicate : he returned to her, and in a voice scarcely audible, she begged him to send for Lady Harriet Gaynham : ‘ I must see her,’ she said, ‘ ’tis my last worldly concern.’ She then sunk into insensibility, and remained so near an hour, in which time the doctor gratified a very reasonable curiosity, by inquiring of Kitty what were the peculiar circumstances of Lady Farnford’s situation.

Lady Harriet had been sent for, and arrived before her friend could be prepared to receive her : she therefore stayed in the next room, and the physician promised she should be called as soon as his patient could safely see her. In about a quarter of an hour after she came, Constance roused herself as from sleep, and turning to Kitty who was in tears by her, she said—‘ O why did I wake ?—I was in the ‘ sweetest place, and my own lord was there too : ‘ how could you call me away ?—there is nothing ‘ but cruelty here :—I will go again—is he gone ‘ back ?—yes, he is, and I shall go to him—he is ‘ happy, and I shall be happy :—and Lady Harriet ‘ she shall go—she shall see her dear brother :—but ‘ will she leave her little ones ? O how I ramble,’ said she, recollecting herself : ‘ Will Lady Harriet ‘ come, and come soon ? if she does not it will be ‘ too late !’

With all possible caution she was told Lady Harriet Gaynham was come, and every thing was done

done to fortify her, lest she should on seeing her faint and recover no more. In a few minutes she seemed tolerably firm, and as she begged very earnestly that this indulgence might not be deferred, they were allowed to meet; but Lady Harriet's grief shocked Constance, and she was obliged to withdraw till the effusions of her sorrow abated: she then returned to her, and taking her nearly lifeless hand, said she hoped she was freed from pain: 'Tolerably so,' Constance replied, 'I have no reason to complain now: it has pleased God to afflict me; but his mercy will deliver me. You are very good to me—I am sorry to have brought such distress on you: Where is your brother?—does he forgive me?' "Forgive you?" said Lady Harriet, 'you need no forgiveness: he is gone'— 'Gone!—whither?' rejoined Constance, 'shall I indeed meet Lord Carlone?—I saw him just now; he smiled at me—he forgave me—he said he was happy: Yet this cannot be!—where is he?' "Sailed for Gibraltar," answered his sister: "He could not endure staying in England." 'God bless him!' cried Constance, 'and enable him to bear his lot:—for your sake I will wish him to live—tell him I loved him—tell him my last prayer shall be for him! And now, Lady Harriet, I must quit you—do not lament my death; rather, if you love me, rejoice in it: think what I have suffered, and what a release it is to me.—I go from a world of vexation

‘ vexation, and disappointment, and I have every
‘ reason to hope, that in leaving it I shall be happy.
‘ I am grieved for the distress I have occasioned
‘ you and your family ; but what have those to an-
‘ swer for that have so injured us ? O gracious
‘ God ! forgive them. I am afraid I must see Lord
‘ Farnford—I ought, for I will die in charity with
‘ every body ; but how I am able to support it the
‘ great God above knows only : yet why should I
‘ fear him ? He has done his utmost : he shall
‘ come, and perhaps the seeing the creature he has
‘ murdered may have a good effect on him : it may
‘ deter him : he shall be the last person whom I shall
‘ see: the short time I shall wait must not be spent
‘ thus. I wish Mr. Carwell was in town. There
‘ was a little I wanted to say to you Lady Harriet,
‘ but you are too much afflicted.’ Her friend find-
ing herself, as Constance had said, too much
afflicted to render her any essential service, asked
her if she would let Mr. Gaynham come up to her,
as he then waited in the carriage. This proposi-
tion was gladly embraced, and he very willingly
came to this scene of sorrow to shew the last act of
friendship human nature is capable of acknowledg-
ing : his visit gave her to whom it was made plea-
sure, and Lady Harriet having retired with the
attendants, Constance, with more collection and
strength than could have been expected, gave
him the necessary directions for disposing of what-
ever she left. She begged to be buried with her

father and mother at Marstonbury, and that nothing about the place of her interment might indicate her being Lord Farnford's wife : she desired Mr. Gaynham to write to Lord Drumferne, to Lord Reycolm, to Mr. Carwell, and to Mr. Aistrey, an account of her death ; she recommended Kitty to Lady Harriet's care, and directed that she should have her clothes and what money was found, or due to her. Her jewels she bequeathed to Lady Harriet, and especially mentioned Lord Calorne's picture. Whatever belonged to her at Marstonbury she wished Mr. Gaynham's children, as the representatives of Lord Calorne, to have ; but he objecting to this, as depriving the family of their right, and stating to her how strong an appearance of fraud it would wear, as her intentions were known only to him, and verbally declared, she contented that they should not interrupt the legal channel. There were some books and papers of Lady Barbara Fitzarthur's at Lord Drumferne's, these she begged Mr. Gaynham to send for, to give the former to his wife, and to destroy the latter with his own hands ; and thus having delivered her injunctions, she sunk down on her pillow. Mr. Gaynham promised an exact compliance with her wishes, and immediately quitted her, to conceal from her that manly fortitude was not sufficient to support the sight of youth, beauty, innocence, and piety in the last conflict.

So long a conversation had made it impossible for her to see Lord Farnford then, but wishing all attachment

tachment to the world at an end, in about an hour she sent for him, and every body on his coming left the room : he stood, without speaking, at her bedside ; her eyes were shut, and he feared she was gone for ever : he took her hand, which had scarcely any remains of animal warmth in it ; she opened her eyes, and seeing him, withdrew it, and made an effort to turn her head from him. ‘ I forgive you,’ said she, faintly, ‘ and, if you sincerely repent, I hope God Almighty will forgive you ; but, my lord, you have been very cruel. I do not mean to reproach you : I rejoice in the effect of what you have done ; and I beg that the few hours I have to live may not be disturbed. I thank you for your care of me during my illness ; and I saw you that I might assure you I harbour no resentment.—Mr. Gaynham has my instructions, I wish you to attend to them :—suffer me now to die in peace.’

His lordship’s spirit was subdued : he saw his victim expiring, and would on any terms have redeemed her life ; but this was not in his power ; and, with sensations till now strangers to his heart, he retired from her ; he could not be prevailed on to leave the room, and injudiciously turning to take a farewell look of her, she saw him, shook her head and asked him why he disturbed her by staying. He was then forced away, and Constance remained quiet as if in a slumber.

C H A P. VI

S U B M I S S I O N.

WHEN he was gone, Lady Harriet, who would not quit the house while the least vital spark existed, returned to her, and finding her in such a state as that her grief could not disturb her, she sat looking at her, and expecting every heaving of her bosom to be the last. Her doze continued till midnight, when she awoke, and lifting up her hands, cried out—‘Thy will be done, thou sweet angel of peace!—I am bid to live and hope, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee, and for thy sufferings thy reward shall be the greater—sweet words! But where is my dear Harriet? I thought she was here, and she too bid me live and hope, and so did my beloved lord:—I saw him—I heard him promise obedience, and I must obey:—and so I will. I wished to die, but I must not: yet why should I live?—that God knows, and the angel could not tell me:—he bid me hope, but what?—Oh! I will hope—it would be wicked to disobey after such goodness.’

Turning to Lady Harriet, and taking one of her hands, she continued—‘ I am told I shall be happy, and that I must not die.—He frowned at me when I said I could not live, and said I *should* live, and afterwards be removed to the sweetest place—all was moon-light, and so cool and beautiful! and your brother met me, and he desired me to live.’ Here her voice dropped, she whispered something more, unintelligibly, and as if quite spent, stretched herself out, and in a moment was profoundly asleep. At that instant Lady Harriet fainted, she was carried into the next room, and the physician leaving Kitty to recover her, sat down by Constance to wait the confirmation of his fears that she was irrevocably gone.

Two hours she remained perfectly torpid, and then evidently breathed, growing every minute warmer, and seeming to sleep sweetly : at eight the next morning she awoke, revived and free from pain ; she was sensible, and after having taken her medicine, slept again till noon, when the Doctor declared his hopes of her life. Mr. Gaynham then took Lady Harriet, who was nearly exhausted with fatigue, home, and Kitty was enjoined to send immediately to them if Lady Farford changed again for the worse.

His Lordship’s joy at hearing there was the least expectation, was still more furious than his grief had been ; but, as he was warned that her recovery could only be hoped for from exercising the utmost
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circumspection, he promised to forbear seeing her; and that nothing should be suffered to agitate her.

Her fever now intermitted; the next day she was better; at the end of a week it gave way, and she experienced the felicity of having her bed made. Lady Harriet's attendance on her was almost uninterrupted, and Mr. Gaynham contributed greatly to her recovery, by his daily visits; he endeavoured to restore the temper of her mind, and to reconcile her to her fate, in which he so far succeeded, that in ten days from the time when she first gave hopes of her life, she professed her willingness to submit patiently to the dispensations of Providence, and being able to sit up, some part of every day, desired that on the next she might see Lord Farnford.

The physicians advised, as the weather was very hot, her being, as soon as her strength would enable her to bear motion, carried out of town: and Lady Harriet immediately proposed her going with her to Oatham; for this it was necessary Lord Farnford's permission should be obtained, but neither Mr. Gaynham nor his wife chose to ask a favour of one who had so injured them: Constance therefore herself undertook to mention it the next day when they were to meet.

She was not worse on the morrow, and received the Earl with less perturbation than her friends had expected: he came to her punctually at the hour she had named, and though his countenance indi-

cated some little displeasure at finding Lady Harriet and Mr. Gaynham were to be the witnesses of their conversation, he expressed in very warm terms his joy at the prospect of her recovery ; he told her he understood change of air was advised for her, that he would send in the evening to order the house at Mount Felix to be got ready for her reception : this disconcerted her, and vexed Lady Harriet, who fearing Constance's acquiescence, answered, —You had better let Lady Farnford go with us to Oatham : I am sure she will find her health and strength return sooner there.—Contrary to their hopes, he replied, that if she wished it, it should be so, and consented to her removal at the end of the week, if she should be found able to bear the journey.

Mr. Gaynham and Lady Harriet were obliged to dine and spend the evening with a friend, and in the afternoon, Constance being better than she had yet been, it was proposed that she should go into the Park for an airing : as soon as it was mentioned to Lord Farnford, he begged to accompany her, and as she was determined to discourage her aversion to seeing him, she complied : she was carried in a chair to Hyde-park gate, where he met her in his coach, and they were now left to a sober tête-a-tête, which his Lordship appeared to enjoy excessively, while his wife's exertions were necessary to support it, without irritating him by manifesting her dislike of it.

Every

Every thing Lord Farnford said was calculated to encourage and to win her: he professed the sincerest contrition—for what he had done, anticipated her reproaches, and owned her hatred of him justifiable; but hoped she would accept with candor all the compensation he could make her, as it was not in his power to restore her to the state he had forced her from. She answered that nothing should make her depart from her duty to him, and to herself, that his former conduct should not prejudice her against him, if it in future was not exceptionable; that the most he could yet expect from her was submission, and that she should endeavour to forget what was past. She told him he had utterly ruined her peace of mind, and she believed he himself saw the madness of his compulsion; but that, if he performed the promise he had often repeated to her, she would not aggravate his remorse, by any reiteration of her complaints.

Words were almost inadequate to express his gratitude for her condescension; he solemnly engaged himself to consult her happiness before every other object, and declared the most serious intention of becoming wholly a new man; representing to her, that this would not be the first reformation effected by beauty and virtue. But that which did most towards reconciling her to her fate was, an assurance that, till her return from Oatham, he would consider her only as the lady to whom he was to be married; and that, if his conduct dur-

ing that time gave her any offence, he would consent to a total separation.

Prepossessed as she was against him, and in favour of another, she could not but own him entitled to some respect, if he adhered to his resolution: he was, for her sake, and to atone for his crime, to make a sacrifice, which, however reasonable or necessary, is the greatest a libertine can offer: he was to abandon vice, and all that for the last ten years of his life he had miscalled pleasure; he was to frame anew all his ideas of happiness; he was to be confined within bounds, hitherto incapable of restraining him, and he was to lead such a life as must at first be irksome to him. She had not vanity enough nor confidence enough in her own attractions to be very credulous; but her natural abhorrence of injustice, and the candour of her temper, made her listen, and hope he was sincere.

They returned home with the same precautions as had been used at their going out; he overjoyed and grateful, she less afraid of him, and more tranquil. Lady Harriet called as she went home in the evening to inquire after her; and, though she was in bed, as she was not asleep, was admitted to see her. Constance related what had passed, and was sorry to perceive that her friend was rather displeased with her endeavours to be satisfied: her excessive hatred of Lord Farnford, and her very strong attachment to her brother, prevented Lady Har-

Harriet's seeing the necessity of Constance's encouraging a disposition to contentment: she dropt some hints, which, though guarded cautiously, were understood, of the incompatibility of two affections of the same species; and gave it as her opinion, that there were no possible circumstances under which it was required of us to dissemble in favour of those who had injured us.

Argument was, after the fatigues of the day, so greatly laborious to Constance, that she could only tell Lady Harriet she discovered her meaning, and assure her that, were she inclined to it, it was out of her power to lessen her regard for Lord Calorne, or to admit another affection of that species; but that there was a duty incumbent on her now to the man who was her husband, and that though she scorned dissimulation, she could not acquit herself, nor would Lord Calorne acquit her, if she continued inflexibly to oppose him, and judged unfairly of his actions. With this her Ladyship seemed tolerably satisfied, and took her leave for the night.

What she had said made Constance very uneasy lest she suspected her of versatility: her motive was evident, and the warmth of her love for Lord Calorne was not to be blamed; but it was a very heavy addition to Constance's mental sufferings, at a time when she was struggling against sickness, grief, and a passion which it was doubtful whether

she could ever conquer, to be almost accused of want of steadiness; her night's rest was broken by reflecting on this subject, and in the morning she felt so much disturbed at it that she sent to Mr. Gaynham desiring to see him before Lady Harriet came; in order that she might know whether he thought her endeavours to submit to a situation from which she could not extricate herself, could be construed into a cessation of the regard she was bound to entertain for Lord Calorne.

Mr. Gaynham came to her, and set her mind completely at ease in this point, by telling her that not only her concern for her own peace, but her duty obliged her to detach, as much as she could, from her remembrance whatever might render her engagement to Lord Farnford more unpleasant than it intrinsically was: he said he knew her well enough to be satisfied that, after her most strenuous endeavours, not one of Lord Calorne's friends would have the shadow of reason for charging her with having forgotten him, and he undertook to convince his wife, that she was as much to blame in harbouring such a suspicion, as imprudent in uttering it.

He did so, before Lady Harriet came at noon, and she was heartily penitent for having suffered her affection for her brother so to overcome her reason: hardly any assurance of forgiveness would pacify her, nor could it have been effectually done,
if

if Constance had not ingenuously confessed that she was made happier by having Mr. Gaynham's approbation of her resolution.

When Lord Farnford made his visit, as the day before, to his wife, he brought a message from Mrs. Stavenell, who had postponed her departure from London, in the hope of seeing her niece.—It was not without reluctance that Constance consented to receive her; it brought innumerable painful ideas forward, and she would gladly have declined the favour, yet that argued resentment and an unbecoming haughtiness, and she would not humour herself: she therefore acquiesced in her wish, and Mrs. Stavenell came just as Lord Farnford was quitting her.

This good lady had so little accustomed herself to look to the future, that she was astonished at seeing the effect which, what she termed *fretting*, had produced on her niece's person: she now, for the first time seemed to think, and protested, with her usual eloquent vehemence, that had she known she would have *laid it so to heart*, she would neither have meddled nor made in the business. Constance begged that there might be no retrospect to what was now irremediable, signified her intention to submit without repining to her fate, and said, she would forgive the injuries she had borne from every body. She told her aunt how fairly Lord Farnford had promised, and Mrs. Stavenell was so much interested for her, as to say, that if he did

not, which she thought impossible, behave to her in such a manner as made living with him agreeable, her house should be at all times a retreat from him. It gave Constance pleasure to be reconciled to a relation of her father's, and Mrs. Stavenell left her, after having given her a very pressing invitation to spend some time, after her return from Oatham, at her house in the country.

In the evening of this day, Constance's feelings were afresh wounded by a melancholy though affectionate letter from Mrs. Aistrey, containing an account of Mr. Aistrey's death the preceding week.

CHAP. VII.

ATTACHMENT.

THE short remainder of the time Mr. Gaynham and Lady Harriet were to stay in town prevented their being so much as they wished with
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Constance ; but she was now so well as to dispense with much of their friendly attendance. Her husband was extremely attentive to her, doing all he could to amuse and gratify her, and confining himself wholly at home that she might not want company : she saw, and was grateful for his kindness, which however could not stimulate her to any return of love, nor relieve her from the uneasiness she felt whenever he entered the room.

She experienced very forcibly the error of Lady Harriet's supposing he could supplant Lord Carlone in her affection, and found that, as her strength returned, the agonizing remembrance of her disappointment revived, and cast a cloud of settled melancholy over her mind. She strove against this, would not indulge in solitude, and frequently compelled herself to see Lord Farnford, lest her aversion to him should increase : he perceived she was still very unhappy, and had the supreme infelicity of being convinced that it was owing to him, and that he could not make her otherwise.

She was to quit London on Saturday, and on Thursday morning the Earl told her he purposed taking his leave at court, as he should go into the country the day after her : she had no objection to his absence ; and, as Lady Harriet was engaged at home for the whole of the day, she set about the arduous task of writing to some of her friends a

detail of what had befallen her : from this she was obliged often to desist, the subject was painful in the highest degree, and all her attempts produced only a short letter to Mr. Carwell.

Lord Farnford called on her after he was dressed, and sat with her till his carriage came, during which time, as indeed in all other of his visits, he treated her with affectionate respect, and confirmed her hopes that at least, he would not aggravate her misery by rendering the situation she had lost, and that she was in, immeasurably incomparable.—Incomparable, in so much as regarded her heart, they must ever remain ; but her reason was cool and impartial enough to shew her that, though he could not annihilate her sorrow, it was in his power to encrease it very much.

Almost as soon as his carriage was gone out of the square, a footman came to her, and said, that a young lady was below who wished to speak to her : she asked what her name was, which the man not having learned, went down to get, and presently returning with a smile which he could not suppress, he said the lady bid him tell her Ladyship she was Charlotte Lycot. Constance was as much at a loss as before she had this information ; but imagining that, though she did not recollect any body of the name, she might remember her on seeing her, she desired the lady might be shewn in, which was soon done, for she had followed the servant to
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the door. Could Constance have immediately recognized her as an old acquaintance, her surprize at her singular appearance would have kept her silent ; but she was convinced, that Charlotte Lycot was an utter stranger. She entered, and stood perfectly upright at the lower end of the room, without speaking, and gave time for the examination of her person : her figure and her face were beautiful, though she was pale and had a melancholy look ; she was tall and thin, and appeared not above twenty years of age : her hair was of a bright chefnut colour ; and though dressed with so little care as to trust only to its own propensity, it hung in ringlets very gracefully on each side of her neck : she had neither cap, hat, bonnet, nor ornament of any kind on her head, nor did she need it, for the *tout ensemble* was such a deviation from all rule, that nothing common was looked for : her cloaths were all white, her gown of a very fine clear muslin, made long, and lying on the ground : she had no hoop, nor the least stiffness in any thing she wore : her apron and handkerchief were both of very expensive French lace ; a white sarsnet cloak hung in suspense between her arms and the floor, and she had a cambrick handkerchief in her hand, tied up, as if containing something : her whole dress bespoke extreme negligence and liberality, and hung on her like wet drapery on a Statuary's lay figure.

The conference was opened by an apology from Constance for keeping her seat, and a request that
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the stranger would sit down, to which she made no other reply, than, Where is my Lord?—If you mean Lord Farnford, said Constance, he is gone to St. James's.—Who are you? rejoined the lady.—This was a question at which Constance paused; but on a repetition of it, she answered, that she was his wife.—That cannot be, cried the stranger; God forbid it! it is impossible: tell me, are you really married to him?—Really, on my word, I am, replied she, who would gladly have been convinced of the impossibility. Why should I be here if I am not his wife?—Then, rejoined the visitor, you are wicked indeed; you have robbed me: you have enticed him from me, and you have broke my heart. Are you Lady Farnford? are you Edward's wife?—I begin to doubt, replied Constance, whether I have a right to say I am; but you are misinformed if you suspect that I *enticed* him: sit down, Madam, and be calm, for I am recovering from a dangerous illness, and my spirits will not bear being hurried.

Who can be calm? replied Charlotte, throwing herself on the sofa: it is you have made him cruel to me: you are the Miss Fitzarthur, I suppose: O how often I wished you dead! he is my husband not your's, and I appeal to Heaven to decide whether I am not his wife: there can be no Lady Farnford but myself; and I will not submit to your usurpation.

No

No entreaties that she would explain herself, no assurances, though voluntarily offered, that could she substantiate a prior claim, she who had ignorantly injured her, would yield to her, could obtain any satisfaction : Charlotte sat gazing steadfastly at her rival, repeating, O you happy woman ! you might well try to entice him : but who would think you would do it ? for you look good and melancholy : yet how can Edward's wife be melancholy ?

Before Constance could reply to or even understand these incoherent apostrophes, the housekeeper sent in, by one of the footmen, a Sandwich of cold chicken and bread, for her lady, who was obliged, as she could take nourishment by very small quantities, to have it often ; the man was setting it on the table, when Constance prevented him, by saying she was not inclined to eat, and that therefore he might take it away again. The young lady threw down her little bundle, advanced, had taking hold of the plate, seated herself in the chair which Lord Farnford had left, and eagerly devoured what had been sent for Constance, without excusing what she did, or seeming aware that this was an uncommon mode of behaviour.

The natural inference from her appearance and conversation, was, that she was mad, and from her avidity that she was in want : Constance's pity now equalled her wonder, and knowing that the contents of the plate would not satisfy even the moderate

rate hunger of a person in health, she, under pretence that, if the remainder of the chicken was brought in, she might perhaps eat of it, sent the man to fetch it, and remained alone with Charlotte Lycot, too much interested for her, and too much astonished to recollect that she exposed herself to danger.

The fair insane appeared perfectly harmless, and wholly occupied by the idea of Lord Farnford: she looked round the room, and said this was dear Lady Maria's sitting-room. O Lady Maria! if I had believed you! but Lady Emma, wicked Lady Emma! you said I might trust him: you said I should be your sister. And here it was, continued she, springing to the marble chimney-slab, here, on this spot, it was that Edward told me he would love me for ever, and that I should be his wife. O deceitful Edward! cruel Lord Farnford!

By the time the servant returned, Constance could collect enough to make her more than ever abhor Lord Farnford: the tears started in her eyes at this wretched young woman's misfortunes, and, as much out of pity to her, as regard to herself, she wished the connection between his Lordship and Charlotte was such as would cancel her marriage: but she was forced to repress her curiosity, as the poor creature was intent only on alleviating her hunger, and became silent as soon as she perceived the means approaching.

The ceremony of inviting her would have been a work of supererogation; Charlotte helped herself
very

very dexterously and demolished the major part of the chicken, Constance taking no notice of her, lest she should interrupt her. When she quitted her knife and fork, she ventured to ask her if there was any kind of pastry or fruit that she would chuse, and if she would not have some sort of beverage.—What have I done? replied the stranger, starting; I did not intend to eat, and I have been betrayed into it. Well! it must not be: here I am, and here I must remain.—Will you not have a glass of wine, or some wine and water? Constance asked.—No, I am obliged to you, she answered mildly; wine is too strong for me: may I have a little water alone?—This was fetched for her; and, while she was drinking it, Constance saw she had a miniature picture of Lord Farnford hung by a ribbon round her neck: a proof, at least, that their connection was not wholly existent in a perturbed imagination.

The two ladies were now left together, and Lord Farnford's last married wife was extremely anxious to learn the stranger's story, which, however, she began to fear she must content herself without, for Charlotte did not appear so communicative even as at first. To induce her to confidence, she told her how much she commiserated the little she had heard of her case, and requested to know whether her claim to Lord Farnford was such a one as she could establish; when her visitor, rising, and taking up her handkerchief, as if going, replied, with a very singular tone and manner,—the happy have no idea
of

of misery : you must enjoy your triumph, Madam ; you have not known the pangs of disappointed love, you are not an outcast from your father's family ; you may glory in the virtue I have lost, and you may be happy, while I with these hands dig my grave, and go to meet my sweet angel.

These expressions, and the despair with which they were uttered, affected Constance deeply, and she begged Charlotte to return, saying, that no one had suffered more than herself from Lord Farnford, and that it was against her strongest inclination that she was his wife ; that she was herself so unhappy, that she wished for nothing so ardently as a release from life, and that she would willingly renounce every right that opposed his doing justice to a person he had wronged.

Charlotte Lycot returned to her seat, and was relieved by a shower of tears, after which she deprived Constance of the hope she had entertained by acknowledging, that her dependence was solely on Lord Farnford's promise, and surprized her by an intimation, that this was not the first time of their meeting.—I do not recollect, said Constance, ever having seen you before, nor ever to have heard your name : where have I seen you ?—In this room, she replied : do you not remember me ? you called here on Lady Maria, and you nursed my little boy : surely you know me : how could you marry my Lord ? I would not, if I had died for love, have been so cruel : he was mine—indeed he loved me
till

till he saw you. O that you had died before he saw you : he has been unkind to me ; but you have been very very cruel.

It now occurred to Constance that this was the young woman whose appearance had excited her curiosity, and confirmed the first ill opinion she entertained of Lord Farnford, in the winter which she spent at Mrs. Stavenell's : she had not forgotten the discovery Lady Maria had made ; but it was impossible for her to have known that this lady was the person she then saw, as her dress was very different, and she saw very little of her.

C H A P. VIII.

P E R F I D Y.

THE stranger lady seemed to derive an odd kind of pleasure from hearing that Lord Farnford's wife was, though from a different cause, equally wretched with herself ; yet she would not bear Constance to
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condemn him ; she contended that, whatever were his failings, his virtues more than counterpoised them, and that he would never have deserted her, had it not been for Miss Fitzarthur, all whose attractions she imputed to her as crimes : she talked extravagantly, but in such a manner as left no doubt that, on any other subject, she would have discovered a very fine understanding, and her infatuation would have excited pity in a person totally uninterested.

After a little farther encouragement, she grew composed and rational, and very freely told Constance how great a disappointment Lord Farnford's marriage was to her : to convince her that his promises were such as might have obtained credit, she produced many of his letters, which were the contents of her handkerchief, and his wife shuddered at his impious breach of faith, when she read vows, imprecations, and solemn engagements, all directed to this one purpose, and verifying the observation of the poet, that

“ L'amante, per aver quel che desia,
“ Senza guardar che Dio tutt 'ode e vede,
“ Avviluppa promesse e giuramenti,
“ Che tutti spargon poi per l'aria i venti.”

His last letter, which had been sent only two days before, was the motive of Charlotte's visit ; and was, though expressive of affection for her,
a strict

a strict injunction to keep at a distance: this, she said, was barbarity she could not bear; she believed Lord Farnford had only told her he was married, that he might more easily shake her off, and her intention in coming was, to implore his pity, and to remind him of his promises.

This was no triumph to Constance, but a very severe affliction: she saw herself the cause of this unhappy girl's misery, and all recollection that she had deviated from rectitude, was absorbed in compassion for her: she inquired whether any, and if any, what provision Lord Farnford had made her; and was glad to find she was more than secure from indigence, but all that she felt for her, was aggravated, when she answered a request to know more particularly who she was, by saying,—I am Lord Lyfcot's daughter, the youngest of his sixteen children, all living: my father is poor, very poor indeed, and suffered good Lady Maria to exercise her liberality in educating me at her expence. I am driven from home, because I am unworthy of my family, and I am placed with a distant relation of my mother's, depending wholly on my dear Lord: my poor little boy is dead: O that his mother was so too! for it is too much to lose him and my Lord. I loved my pretty angel, because he was so like his father; but yet it was better he should die: he is happy, and this is a world of misery.

Per.

Perceiving the tears trickle down Constance's cheeks, she thanked her for her sympathy, and told her she must not be sorry for her, since what she suffered was the consequence of her own fault: you should do, said she, as all my relations do, upbraid and reproach me: you should bid me think how I have sullied the honour of my ancient family, and what a disgrace I am to my name.—That, replied Constance, you shall never hear from me: if it is in my power to relieve any part of your distress, I will gladly do it; and though you cannot expect my receiving you here, or that I should attempt to revive Lord Farnford's affection for you, I will omit nothing that can restore your peace of mind, consistent with my duty to him and myself: make me your friend, and I will endeavour to deserve your friendship.—At these consolatory words, Charlotte eagerly grasped her hand; and, while the brightness of her eyes was heightened by the emotions of her heart, she answered, You shall be my friend, and I will repay your kindness by promising never to see my Lord again: you must not be made unhappy by such a creature as I am; and though I can assure you that from the first moment when Lady Maria discovered my attachment to him, and enjoined me, when it was too late, as I valued her love, to preserve what remained of my character, and not to aggravate my error, I have never seen Edward but in the presence of a third person: this cannot satisfy you who are his wife:

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it would not satisfy me : I yield him to you, and will pursue some course that shall effectually divide us. I had resolved from the time when he sent me that cruel letter, that I would not eat, but I have not fortitude for so lingering a death.

So much was Constance occupied with her unfortunate visitor, that, till Lord Farnford's carriage stopped at the door, she did not recollect that there was a chance he might return before she was gone, which was untowardly the case ; and just as Charlotte had got to the door of the room, intending to remain in the next, lest he should immediately come up to Lady Farnford, and, as there was no escape but by that door, see her, he reached the top of the stairs. Constance, not knowing what she had best do, but disliking concealment, told Charlotte to stay, and at the instant of his entrance, the wretched girl panting for breath, flew to his arms. He received her with some shew of tenderness ; but, as if recalling to his mind that this was improper, he exclaimed,—Good God, Miss Lycot ! why are you here ? Is this doing as I bid you, Charlotte ? come with me, you must not stay with Lady Farnford.—No, Sir, said Constance, interposing, you shall not take her from me, unless you consent to my instantly quitting your house : let her sit down. I have heard how irreparably you have injured her, and I have undertaken to be her friend : you must not be cruel to her, because you have married me.

Shame,

Shame, vexation, and anger, were in a moment legibly written on the Earl's countenance, who, it must be confessed, was in rather an embarrassing situation between his wife and his mistress: he walked up and down the room, without speaking, while Charlotte deprecated his wrath for her disobedience, and Constance deplored her own misery in tears: he found it impossible to say any thing to Miss Lycot in another room, and as difficult to say any thing to either of the ladies where they were. From this awkward distress his wife released him, by dispassionately telling him, that, notwithstanding his marriage rendered any connection with Miss Lycot more eminently criminal than ever, she must insist on his making her every atonement in his power, and that she would willingly permit their meeting, for the purpose of permanently settling her out of the reach of farther danger; that she trusted his Lordship would not openly insult his wife, and would, for their convenience, retire to another room.

Charlotte earnestly intreated her not to go, and Lord Farnford joined her: it was then seriously debated how Charlotte should be disposed of, to remove all cause of complaint; but she objected to whatever was suggested, and nothing was agreed on. She went away in a hackney coach, which had been waiting for her, and promised to ruminate on the several schemes proposed, and to write her sentiments to Lady Farnford on the morrow.

When

When she was gone, he threw himself on a chair, with his arms crossed, the very image of abject shame; it was a subject on which nothing was to be said: for it would neither admit of justifying, excusing, nor palliating: at last he made an effort to rise, and went toward the door, when Constance desired him to return, and, if he was totally at a loss, to give her a patient hearing. He replied he would; and, resuming his seat, prepared to stand the reproaches he well knew he merited; but she, who never wasted that time in retrospect which could be beneficially employed in providing for the future, exempted, by the privation of affection for her husband, from jealousy, and really commiserating Charlotte Lyfscot's case, as if she had no interest in it, reminded him, that by her promise she was bound to judge of him, not by what he had been, but by what he was to be; and removed his well-grounded fears, by telling him she was before too intimately acquainted with his vices, to be very much irritated by this event: she desired him seriously to think what should be done for the young woman, since he must see that her remaining in their neighbourhood was improper; and she concluded by saying, that she should make her case her own, and do all in her power to lighten her misfortunes.

His Lordship was relieved by, and astonished at, this uncommon degree of benevolence; and, acknowledging her goodness, replied, that he would

obey her in every thing she proposed ; that he would never see Miss Lycot again : but that she should be at liberty to do for her whatever she thought proper : he confessed that his passion for her had been very strong, till his attention was drawn to Miss Fitzarthur ; and that, at the time of his promising to marry her, it was his intention : he spoke very highly of her, represented her as of a most amiable disposition, expressed his sorrow for the misery he had brought on her, wished it reparable, and concluded, by saying that, though his affection for her was now only friendship, he never entertained an idea of abandoning her : on the contrary, he had endeavoured, since he was married, to place her in an extremely advantageous situation, for there was a friend of his, a man with 2000*l.* a year, who was very desirous of having her, and he had made her the offer.—And why did she not accept it ? Constance asked.—You will be still more angry with me, he answered, if I tell you her attachment to me made her refuse it.—I am very angry indeed, rejoined Constance, but my resentment is useless : O Lord Farnford ! what have you to answer for ! or rather, what have you not to answer for ;

It was very readily that the Earl concurred in his wife's wish to remain alone after the fatigue of so much conversation ; the subject of it was not pleasing ; and he could not but be sensible he made a

very indifferent figure in it: he did not, however, quit her without repeating his assurances of a thorough reformation, and his expressions of gratitude for her candour and generosity.

CHAP. IX.

EXILE.

THE next morning Constance received this letter from Miss Lycot:—

‘ Madam,

‘ I have thought all night on the schemes we
‘ talked of yesterday, yet cannot elect any one of
‘ them: the most agreeable to me are the least pro-
‘ per; for it is due to you that I should remove to
‘ a distance from Lord Farnford: you shall be, at
‘ all events, made easy, and I would undergo any
‘ thing rather than make one who appeared so kind-
‘ ly concerned for me in the least degree unhappy.
‘ —I so rarely meet with compassion, that I ought
‘ to cherish it, and when it flows from so unexpected
‘ a source, I should be inexcusable to disregard it.

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‘ It

‘ It is my earnest desire to promote my lord’s
 ‘ happiness, and for this purpose I will make any
 ‘ sacrifice : here I am an impediment to it ; I there-
 ‘ fore beg you will obtain his consent to my imme-
 ‘ diately retiring into one of the English convents
 ‘ in France or Flanders, where I think I shall be
 ‘ less unhappy than in any other place.

‘ Do not doubt my steadiness or my sincerity :—
 ‘ I have lost Edward—there is nothing that I can
 ‘ regret. It is a voluntary, a necessary exile, and
 ‘ surely it would be presumption in me to look for
 ‘ greater enjoyment. I do not deserve any ;—but
 ‘ yet Oh Edward !——

‘ I beg your pardon for what I have written,
 ‘ and what I was going to write : you are his wife,
 ‘ and as his wife shall be respected.—I will not in-
 ‘ dulse.—Remind him of our reading Henry and
 ‘ Emma, and that

“ She of all mankind could love but him alone.”

‘ Forgive me, for I am sure your benevolence is
 ‘ even of that magnitude : pity me, for you have
 ‘ sensibility in your heart and countenance ; and be-
 ‘ lieve me, with the utmost gratitude,

‘ Your most obedient,

‘ CHARLOTTE LYSCOT.’

Constance sent to desire Lord Farnford would
 come to her as soon as she had read this letter, and
 giving it to him, watched his countenance while
 he perused it : she thought he was not quite un-
 moved, though he strove to appear so ; and from
 his

His ready acquiescence, and his desire to be as brief as possible on this topic, it was evident that a little fuel would rekindle the flame: he requested his wife to write to Charlotte, and as this species of retirement had been before urged to her by her family, he undertook to prevail on one of the unhappy girl's brothers to place her in any seminary she preferred.

The Earl and Constance dined together for the first time since their marriage, this day; and, in the evening Lady Harriet came to fetch her, that she might sleep in Burlington-street, and set off early in the morning for Oatham without needless fatigue. When the hour of her departure arrived, he almost retracted his consent to her going, and when he failed in persuading her to defer her journey, he pressed her staying where she was till Mr. Gaynham's family were to set out; but this Lady Harriet, who had particular pleasure in opposing him, would not admit. He intimated his apprehensions that her friends would endeavour to render her averse to returning to him, and desired that the period of her absence should be limited.

Lady Harriet named three months for it, which he thought much too long, and said she had better have named three ages; that his allowing Lady Farnford to leave him at all, considering that her house at Mount Felix was ready for her, was more than most men, under such circumstances, would do; but that for three months she should not go.

Lady Harriet replied, that she had learnt obstinacy from him, and therefore should make it an invariable rule to give up no point ; but Constance put an end to altercation, by referring it to him to name the time when he expected her to return, and promising, if her health was tolerably re-established, punctually to observe it ; ‘ For,’ said she, ‘ however you have extorted it, you have a claim to my obedience.’ This perfectly appeased him, and he told her, that painful as the separation was to him, as she knew he thought it would be too long if extended to three months, he would leave it to her, and, in the hope of her returning willingly, would not limit her. He then begged to speak with her in private, which being complied with, he furnished her abundantly with money, desired she would draw on him for what ever she wanted, and asked if he might hope for her correspondence. She answered, yes—she would write. “ And may I not be permitted to see you ?” he added, “ I shall be at Mount Felix, which is at no greater distance from Mr. Gaynham’s than that is from London, and you would make me very happy by suffering me to visit you : cannot you prevail on Lady Harriet ? or will you not try ?” ‘ I know not how to ask her to invite you,’ she replied, ‘ and, indeed my lord, I wonder you can think of seeing me at the house of one you have behaved so ill to.’ He said he would do any thing for the pleasure of seeing her ; but finding she would make no promise, he returned with her to Lady Harriet,

Harriet, who, when they were about to quit the house, said to him—"If Lady Farnford thinks it necessary to see your lordship, or if a long absence will aggravate the pain she must feel at meeting you, our regard for her will so far overcome our resentment, that notwithstanding the injury Mr. Gaynham and I have suffered from you, you are not excluded from dining with her at Oatham, when she chuses it." With this cavalier invitation, or rather licence, he was gratified, and having kissed his wife's hand, the greatest favour he had ever yet obtained, he accompanied the ladies to the carriage.

What Constance felt at entering the house in Burlington-street made her friends repent their caution in bringing her there, and doubt whether she could possibly set out the next morning: they were obliged to sit in a room which they had not used while she was with them; she could not bear to see the children or servants; nor could she close her eyes all night. Kitty, who was the only attendant she took, sat up with her, and at six in the morning they quitted London, when Constance grew more composed.

For some days after her removal her health seemed impaired by it, but as her fatigue wore off, it again mended, and she became serenely melancholly: her husband sent over from Mount Felix every day, to inquire after her, and transmitted her a farewell letter from Charlotte Lycot, dated from

Calais. She wrote in a manner that bespoke her feelings, yet with a degree of fortitude and resignation that could scarcely have been demanded of her, and with the most ardent wishes for Lady Farnford's happiness, she entreated her pardon and her pity. Constance was extremely hurt at being the occasion of driving this poor young creature into banishment, and nothing could have persuaded her that it was justifiable, had not the salutary consequences of it been evident, as it detached her from a world that could be productive of no innocent pleasure to her, and afforded her protection, security, and leisure to reflect. The lady abbess of the convent chosen for her, was a person of whom her family had some knowledge, and she was to be received as a protestant boarder, without any intention of profession.

The next letter she received was from her old landlady, Mrs. Langrivier, who enclosed to her a letter which had been some days in her possession : pleasure now first shone on her countenance, when she recognized Lord Reycoln's hand in the superscription : he addressed her, by the name of Fitzarthur, in these terms.

‘ My dear Madam,

‘ An English newspaper has this moment brought
‘ us an article of intelligence so palpably false, that
‘ I am almost ashamed of asking a contradiction of
‘ it ; and, were it not for the dictum, that there is
‘ nothing impossible, I should not mention it to you.

‘ However,

‘ However, it is a pretence for writing to you, and
‘ can do you no more harm than making you laugh.
‘ Perhaps you may be most inclined to laugh when
‘ I tell you, that notwithstanding I give no credit
‘ to it, it makes me uneasy : this I will explain to
‘ you, when I have satisfied the curiosity I suppose
‘ I have excited.

‘ We are given to understand that you are married :
‘ —no improbable event ! But, of all people that on
‘ earth do dwell, to whom do you think the printer
‘ of the paper has given you ?——to the Right
‘ Honourable the Earl of Farnford ! Yes, I see
‘ your hands and eyes lifted up ; but I assure you
‘ I am correct, and will, on requisition, send you
‘ the paragraph.

‘ Now, although I am convinced this cannot be
‘ true, I am apprehensive that it may be productive
‘ of some inconvenience to you. I know very
‘ little, except by report, of Lord Farnford ; but
‘ that little is enough to stimulate me to warn one
‘ for whom I entertain so great a regard, from a
‘ danger that, if it is not ideal, is alarming. . He
‘ to whom they have so kindly disposed of you, is,
‘ of all men living, the most unfit for you ; yet, per-
‘ haps he may have thought proper to address you,
‘ and the premature conclusion may be drawn from
‘ his intimacy with Mrs. Stavenell ; all of his ac-
‘ quaintance are aware that his heart is ever an
‘ offering to beauty, and it might, without pre-

‘ sumption, be deemed impossible that he could be
‘ insensible to Miss Fitzarthur’s.

‘ If he does seriously pay his devoirs to you, I
‘ need not charge you to use all your circumspec-
‘ tion ; but I will tell you, you must not receive
‘ him. I am in a great degree accountable for your
‘ future fate, and will usurp authority to enjoin
‘ you on no consideration to listen to him. He is,
‘ my dear Miss Fitzarthur, perfectly known in
‘ France, and is, even in a land of caprice, folly,
‘ and gallantry, acknowledged a phenomenon : he
‘ is allowed to have a very fine person, and to be
‘ externally, a truly resplendent specimen of the
‘ British court ; but to this is always added, that he
‘ has neither honour nor probity, that he would be-
‘ tray his best friend to seduce his daughter, that the
‘ pleasure of a chace of this sort is enhanced by
‘ the criminality of it, and that no nobleman ever
‘ came into this kingdom, in a private character,
‘ whose abilities and will to do mischief, were so
‘ eminent and so equal.

‘ Whether he has or has not merited this censure,
‘ is not necessary to inquire for you to form your
‘ determination ; my knowledge of him without it
‘ would, I am certain, deter you even if your
‘ affections were inclined to him :—you shall not
‘ have a libertine. I know only one man deserving
‘ of you, or with whom I would trust you ; you
‘ are acquainted with him : he admired you when he
‘ thought

‘ thought you mine : he is not an earl, but he is
‘ an earl’s son :—can you not guess ?

‘ I think I might venture, without offending
‘ you, to gratify my curiosity : you will not call
‘ me impertinent, if you know how sincerely I am
‘ interested for you. Tell me then, has Calorne
‘ remained an indifferent spectator of the various
‘ mutations you have experienced ? is it credible
‘ that he, who if my penetration does not deceive
‘ me, made a very costly sacrifice to friendship by
‘ suffering me to claim you, can have preserved a
‘ neutrality ? If he has, I am much mistaken in my
‘ opinion of him, and if he has not, and you have
‘ rejected him, as you would not have done so with-
‘ out reason, I yield in sagacity to you.

‘ Come, my dear madam, make me your con-
‘ fidante, or, should you hesitate at this, I will
‘ resign the honour to my wife. Above all things,
‘ take care that you are not imposed on by specious
‘ appearances : Lord Farnford is of too warm a
‘ temper to be moderately in love, and with such a
‘ subject, even *I* confess extravagance justifiable :
‘ He will endeavour, if his intentions respecting
‘ you are what I will assume they are, to win on you
‘ by the common arts ; if these fail, he will call
‘ on your pity ; for, by all I can collect, there is
‘ no conduct too abject for him to adopt when a lady
‘ is to be obtained. Be deaf to him, and do not
‘ scruple to drive him to desperation, he will neither

‘ hang nor drown himself, and if he dies of a broken
‘ heart, well and good.

‘ Should you, which I hope is not the case, un-
‘ fortunately like him, your natural benevolence and
‘ disposition to think well of the world will lead you
‘ to doubt my judgment : you will say he cannot
‘ be what I represent him, for he does not appear
‘ so ; but trust me he is ; and that part of his cha-
‘ racter which I fear principally, is a most cruel
‘ caprice, which when he found you were not to be
‘ as easily deserted as the other objects of his love,
‘ would, I am convinced, manifest itself in re-
‘ venge.

‘ Write your sentiments ingenuously, and tell
‘ me the state of your affections : if you are at all
‘ in doubt, or if I can in any way be of service to
‘ you, I will disregard all opposing circumstances,
‘ and be in England as soon as possible. Should
‘ matters be tending towards a wrong conclusion, I
‘ would rather run the risque of carrying you off
‘ and placing you with my Adelaide, than suffer
‘ you to doom yourself to incessant misery.

‘ Lady Reycollm thinks my exertions to prevent
‘ Lord Farnford’s success unnecessary ; she says,
‘ that while she was with you he shewed you more
‘ than an equivocal degree of attention, and that
‘ you complained of it ; yet she is so persuaded
‘ that you dislike him, that she will scarcely allow
‘ me to suppose the contrary. She joins me in
‘ every

‘ every good wish for you, and bids me assure you
 ‘ of her regard.

‘ You have made me, according to my wishes
 ‘ happy ; I will testify my gratitude by preventing
 ‘ your being unhappy, even against your inclina-
 ‘ tion ; for I mean the world should know, that in
 ‘ every exigence you can command the most fre-
 ‘ nuous endeavours of

‘ Your sincerely affectionate,

‘ R E Y C O L M.

‘ P. S. A letter directed to me at Charolles,
 ‘ Burgundy, will find me there, if it arrives
 ‘ before you hear from me again.’

CHAP. X.

R E C E P T I O N.

THERE are few sensations of the mind more
 painfully felt than regret, its natural property
 being and its essence consisting in the exclusion of
 hope : had that species of it which Lord Reycoln's
 well-intended letter excited been accompanied by

the least tincture of self-condemnation, she whom it warned would have been beyond aggravation wretched ; but the certainty that she had submitted to an inevitable necessity alone, still supported her ; and, though she was grieved and terrified by the picture presented to her view, she was not less resigned than before. She reflected, that there was no time at which this prohibition could have arrived opportunely, since Lord Reycoln's sentiments being her's, and she having done her utmost to act in conformity to them, had his expressions been still stronger, or her danger greater, she could not have avoided her fate. What he said concerning Lord Calorne so affected her, as to prevent her obeying the impulse to answer his letter immediately, yet it was beneficial, for it enabled her to think steadily on her misfortunes, and on the conclusion of a detail of them she found the oppression of her heart relieved.

Mr. Gaynham and Lady Harriet omitted nothing from which the least advantage to her could be hoped ; the former using all his powers to reconcile her to her situation, the latter endeavouring to detach her thoughts from it. In a fortnight they had succeeded so far in restoring her as to render the continuance of medicine needless, and she was as well as she or Mr. Gaynham, who was much less sanguine than his wife, expected she ever would be : she had yet recovered a very small portion of strength ; she eat on *philosophical* principles, reasoning

ing on the necessity however irksome, and excessive fatigue could procure sleep: her spirits were composed, and she flattered herself that her fortitude increased. She spent her time in strolling about the grounds from one bench to another, in riding, and in conversation with Mr. Gaynham, for Lady Harriet was not a talking companion for her, nor could she sit long with her; Lord Calorne's features resembled her's too strongly to look at her without thinking of him; a thousand circumstances in her manner, in her phrases, and in every motion, which an uninterested person would have disregarded, were obvious to Constance, notwithstanding the likeness was not such as to point her out as his sister on her first acquaintance with her. Beside this, Lady Harriet was, in spite of all her efforts to conceal it, evidently very unhappy and very anxious for her brother: he was gone to a place, at that time of imminent danger, and no news of him had yet arrived; but she never mentioned her fears, nor was he once named by any of the family.

But Constance soon found that a life of indolence was, in the highest degree, unpleasant: there was an elastic spring in her mind, which, though depressed by the heavy hand of adversity, was not broken; and she hoped the uneasiness she felt at being idle, was an indication of returning mental health: she therefore employed part of her leisure in writing to her friends, and could tell Mrs. Aistrey that she was too wretched to fear further misfor-

fortune, without obliterating the characters by her tears. A long letter from Mr. Carwell, expressive of astonishment, sorrow, and regard, and urging the most consolatory precepts, was a cordial to her, and stimulated her to exertions of which she was before incapable.

She had hitherto seen no company, not even the casual visitors to Lady Harriet, having always retired from all society but that of the family, and not chusing to be seen, or restrained by the indispensable forms of behaviour.

Her being at Mr. Gaynham's was soon known, many in the neighbourhood came to make an acquaintance with her, but she declined it, and all invitation.

Lord Farnford had written frequently to her, and she had answered one of his letters : he now grew very urgent to see her ; and, dreading his anger if she put him off any longer, she named a day when she would receive him : he accepted the permission, which she had not been solicitous to conceal, resulted from a sense of duty rather than inclination, with the utmost joy : his Lordship seldom cared by what means he procured gratification, or what price he paid for it : to see her, was his wish, and he regarded not whether it were granted freely or reluctantly.

Mr. Gaynham and Lady Harriet would have dined from home on the day when he was to come ; but Constance, who found all her resolution hardly
suffi-

sufficient to support the idea of seeing him, intreated them not to leave her; her heart sunk as the time approached, and she almost wished she had refused him, whatever had been the consequences; for what Lord Reycoln had said of him, had re-animated her dislike, and the hint he gave of the probability that he would discover a disposition to revenge, while it made her cautious of offending him, rendered it still more difficult to avoid it.

On the morning of his expected arrival, Lady Harriet told her friend, that she must dispense with her appearing, for that her hatred of, and her cause to hate Lord Farnford, were such, that she could not sit at table with him: no reasoning could alter her Ladyship's determination; and Constance, who could not but own the justice of her resentment, was obliged to rest contented with a promise, that Mr. Gaynham would not leave the house: his wife went to make a visit, and he employed the interval preceding Lord Farnford's coming, for which, lest he should surprize them at day-break, noon was named, in encouraging her to behave steadily.

Precisely at twelve o'clock, his phaeton stopped at the door, and Mr. Gaynham would have quitted her, saying he would return soon, but that his Lordship must certainly be displeased at having a witness of their meeting.—If you go, said Constance, I cannot see him: he has no right to be angry at any thing: I will not receive him alone.—Mr. Gaynham warned her of the danger of irritating

tating a man of such a temper, and expressed his fears that, however he might on this occasion smother his resentment, it would break out, and he use her worse in future.—She replied, that she must risque it, for it was impossible she should stand such a shock without giving him still more evident proofs how little he was welcome.

The door now opened, and the Earl was announced. Mr. Gaynham led Constance towards him, while she shook from head to foot, and every feature spoke dejection and aversion. The smile on her husband's countenance was changed to a look of disapprobation; he bowed to Mr. Gaynham, took her hand without speaking, and watching her steadfastly, had the merited mortification of seeing the tears gush from her eyes: he retreated with her to a seat, his vexation was not to be concealed; and, as if he expected the warmest welcome, he, instead of soothing her, reproached her with unkindness, and told her she had improved her time very ill to be no better prepared to see him. She made no reply, she was more than ever disgusted, and his want of tenderness rendered her careless whether he was or was not pleased.

To relieve her from an importunity equally injudicious on Lord Farnford's part, and cruel to her, Mr. Gaynham, said he was amazed that his Lordship should have hoped for a better reception, or indeed that he had not expected a worse, since he could not be ignorant that had Lady Farnford consulted

sulted her ease, in preference to her strict notions of duty, she would never again have seen the author of so much misery to her. I do not say this, continued Mr. Gaynham, to irritate you; but to convince you, that it is your own fault, if you are disappointed: Lady Farnford has done her utmost to reconcile herself to her misfortunes; she has done more than I thought human nature capable of; we have, out of regard to her peace, aided her resolution; and I must tell your Lordship, that you are both ungrateful and impolitic to harraßs her with complaints; they may shorten her life, but they will never promote your interest: if you wish her to be calm, and to behave to you with a tolerable degree of placability, leave her to herself, she has no better adviser.

I beg her pardon, and your's, answered Lord Farnford, quitting her, and going towards Mr. Gaynham, I own myself to blame, and will trust to time and her own good sense that she will receive me more favourably. I am disappointed, but would do any thing, or give up any thing for her good opinion.—He then entered into conversation with her kind advocate, and she was suffered to remain undisturbed till her spirits grew more composed.

C H A P. XI.

B R I D E R Y.

REASON generally was victorious in the mind of Constance, and her passions had been so nearly extinguished, that the conflict was shortened : ten minutes did much towards her recovery, and chiding herself for presuming, after such chastisements, to have any antipathy, she made an effort, rose, went towards her husband, and atoned for her inability to speak, by giving him her hand : this delighted him, and mistaking it for an indication of her temper, it encouraged him boldly to request to speak with her alone : her reluctance convinced him of his error ; she said Mr. Gaynham was so much her friend, that he could be no restraint on their conversation : that he was very well acquainted with all that concerned her, and that she must beg to be excused from this obedience.

Mr. Gaynham's situation was now awkward ; he saw Constance's unwillingness, and yet the request was as justifiable, as the authority was indisputable : he there-

therefore proposed an accommodation, which was that, his horses should be put to Lord Farnford's chaise, and that he should drive her for an airing. This she did not much like, for she was really afraid, as he seemed dissatisfied, that he would threaten her, or perhaps insist on her going to Mount Felix; however, it was imprudent to thwart him, and she consented.

It was well for his Lordship and his companion, that Mr. Gaynham's horses required not much management; for their driver was too completely occupied to bestow his attention on them; he struck out of the high road into a wood, and there suffered them to take the track they chose, the groom loitering behind the carriage. Here it was that the Earl exerted all his power of elocution to familiarize his unhappy wife to her doom: he talked well and rationally, he professed the sincerest repentance of the force he had put on her, promised that his whole life should be devoted to making her all possible reparation, and most earnestly besought her to accept his love.

She was able to remonstrate coolly with him on the unprecedented cruelty he had been guilty of, which he acknowledged great: she told him she would, in all situations, to the utmost of her abilities, do her duty; but that if he flattered himself with deriving from his marriage, that degree of happiness which might be hoped for from an union
of

of choice, he would find himself deceived ; and she could not doubt, would make her feel his resentment : she warned him not to expect any return of affection from her, as though he might by his future conduct diminish her hatred of him, he was a man she never could love, even if her inclinations had not found an object.

He did not seem willing to believe she could long remain obdurate or unattached to him : for, as his opinion of himself seldom erred by being too low, he was persuaded that, if once her prejudices against him were removed, she would not be indifferent to him : he opposed to what she urged, an observation that, there was a degree of tenderness which every English woman felt for her husband, on which he could rely for his happiness ; and represented to her, that on a candid judgment she must own, that if his affection and attention towards her were equal to what she might have expected from the man of her choice, as his abilities to indulge her were greater, her situation would be in proportion better. She looked at him when he uttered this sentiment, and replied,—Lord Farnford, you have no heart.—He affected to laugh, and gallantly rejoined, that it was very true, for it had been her's above eighteen months.

His next endeavours was to interest her in the provision he designed to make for her ; and after having in vain striven to dazzle her by golden promises,

misses, he ventured to request that she would spend one day with him at Mount Felix : notwithstanding she declined it, he so pressed this point, that she was obliged to consent, that, if Mr. Gaynham would accompany her, she would dine with him on that day se'nnight : with this he was highly delighted, and during their return homeward, improved the favourable occasion, by hinting his wish that she would soon think of coming to reside with him.

This was a topic that always electrified her whenever it was started ; but when it was once mentioned his Lordship saw a great advantage was gained, which it was not his custom ever to forego : his scheme was perfectly settled, and he communicated the particulars of it, which were these : that, lest Lady Farnford should, in case of his death, meet with any difficulty in proving her marriage, the ceremony should be again performed, publicly ; either at one of his houses, or at any church she would name, or, if Mr. Gaynham would permit it, he would marry her at Oatham, whenever she would appoint, and take her over to Mount Felix, the next morning : that they should stay there a few days, and then go to Mrs. Stavenell's, whither they were strongly invited ; that their next remove should be to Pictonbourne, where he told her she should live *en princesse*, and keep a court of her own : and that in January, if it was agreeable to her,

her, they would return to London, to the pleasures of which place she should be introduced in all the splendor of high rank and fortune, and rendered the object of universal envy and admiration: his protestations always ended, as they began, with assurances of his love for her, that her gratification should be the only aim of his life, and that there was no one fault in his character which he would not for her sake amend.

To a mind so ill at ease, nothing was a temptation; and so great was the horror Constance conceived at the idea of living with him, that she would gladly have cancelled all his promises to have been permitted to remain at Mr. Gaynham's: she knew enough of the æconomy of Lord Farnford's life, and of the set of intimates he had chosen, to be satisfied that a residence in his house must be very irksome, even if other circumstances did not increase her dislike; but how was she to bear it when her friends left her, and she was to look to him as her companion: her situation would have just as much resemblance to that she hoped for with Lord Calorne, as would torment her by a distracting comparison, and she could not but think the greatest kindness her husband could shew her would be, by excessive cruelty and departure from his engagements, to break her heart, and rid her of a burthen some existence.

As soon after their return as they met Mr. Gaynham, Lord Farnford told him of the conditional
pro-

promise he had obtained from Constance, and asked him, if he would make it absolute, by engaging to come over to Mount Felix with her and Lady Harriet, on that day se'nnight.—Whatever will be acceptable to Lady Farnford, he replied, I will most readily do; but, as for my wife, I dare not include her in the party: you cannot wonder at her entertaining a very strong dislike to your Lordship: nor can you expect to see her at your house, when I tell you she has quitted her own house to-day to avoid meeting you.—Lady Harriet is very revengeful, rejoined the Earl. I must intreat my wife to intercede with your's for me.

The rest of the day passed without any aggravation of its horror, and Lord Farnford submitted the settlement he had proposed to Constance to Mr. Gaynham's judgment: it was such as those most anxious for her could not but approve: Mr. Gaynham seemed inclined to think, her situation would be less disagreeable than he had feared, and intimating that he should constitute himself guarantee of the articles agreed on, Lord Farnford answered, that he should be very happy in having some one of her friends who would form a candid opinion of his conduct to her; and, if it was required, he offered to make a separate settlement on her, in case he could hereafter be proved in any instance, to have broken his promise to her: he unreservedly acknowledged he had been much to blame, and

that not even the violence of his passion for Lady Farnford could warrant what he had done : he said that she had made him mad, and he had acted madly ; but, if Mr. Gaynham was satisfied with his intentions of atoning, as far as he could, for all his errors, he trusted he would be an advocate for him, as well as for her, since those most inclined to condemn him and to pity her, must see, that the promoting discord between them, could answer no good purpose.

At nine his Lordship had ordered his carriage, and, not a little elated with his visit and with his success, in prevailing on Constance to return it, he took his leave of her. When he was gone, Mr. Gaynham said what he could, to encourage her in thinking her fate was not very terrible : I am convinced, said he, that you will exert yourself to overcome whatever may be an impediment to your peace ; and I hope, if Lord Farnford makes good his professions, nothing will be wanting, but that he should have been the object you had chosen.— She shook her head : her truly kind friend found this was an argument that would not bear discussion, he changed the discourse, and soon after Lady Harriet came home.

C H A P. XII.

D I L I G E N C E.

ALL mention of Lord Calorne's name had been hitherto carefully avoided, and Constance found that, unless she herself shewed the non-necessity of the caution, it would be still observed: she wished very much to know, if he was perfectly satisfied that her inclination had no part in what she had done; and flattering herself that, as she had born the sight of her husband so much better than she had expected, her fortitude was increased beyond a possibility of desertion, she, the following day, in a ramble with Mr. Gaynham, when Lady Harriet was not present, ventured, though with much circumspection, to ask if any account of him had arrived: Mr. Gaynham replied, that they had not heard of him: but, said he, I am very glad you have voluntarily named him: we have forbore speaking of him in your hearing, lest you should be still too much affected, and you must not mention him to Harriet, for her strength

of mind is not equal to your's.——There is one particular, said Constance, on which I wish much for satisfaction ; if you would give it me, my mind would be easier ; and, as being the wife of another, I would then endeavour to exclude Lord Calorne from my thoughts, however impossible it is to banish him from my remembrance : does he acquit me ?——Are you sure, said Mr. Gaynham, you can bear to hear one talk of him ? he does most fully acquit you : the last words he uttered to me were, that he could not *forgive* you, because he *acquitted* you : that you were not to blame in any one circumstance ; and that ——, but you had better turn your thoughts, Lady Farnford, to something else ; you are not so courageous as you imagine.——She replied, while the tears ran down her cheeks, and her lips changed blue, that nothing could affect her ; and she begged Mr. Gaynham to indulge her, by continuing what he was going to say, without regarding her. He then confessed, that he had in his possession a letter which his brother-in-law had left for her, but which, it had yet been judged imprudent to shew her. She expressed an earnest wish to see it, and obtained a promise that if she would prepare herself for the contents, which must be of the most melancholy kind, she should have it, as soon as they reached the house. During the short remainder of their walk, Mr. Gaynham strove to give her the resolution it was apparent she wanted ; and, having
fol-

followed him to the library, she received with many admonitions, Lord Calorne's letter, which she took to her own chamber :

‘ Wednesday morn. 3 o'clock.

‘ An hour's sleep—all I have had since
‘ I saw you, has enabled me to collect my dis-
‘ persed thoughts ; and I seize this transient return
‘ of reason to write to you—and bid you adieu—for
‘ ever.—Yes—I must bid an eternal adieu to her
‘ with whom a week ago I hoped to have passed the
‘ future period of my life—What is it I have done
‘ that I am so punished ?—why am I doomed to mi-
‘ sery ?—O Miss Fitzarthur ! for never will I own
‘ you for the wife of that villain ; where shall I find
‘ comfort ?—Had you died in my arms I had borne
‘ it ; I should then have been certain you were hap-
‘ py ; but now I feel not only my own wretched-
‘ ness but your's.

‘ But I write not to complain : if my senses will
‘ serve me I will exculpate myself from all suspi-
‘ cion of having ever, in thought, word, or deed,
‘ deceived you.—Good God ! if I were capable of
‘ it I should indeed deserve my misfortunes.—You
‘ may remember my expressing to you a wish that
‘ I could, at the same time that I was forwarding
‘ my own interest, assist Derville and Miss Ecklow,
‘ and I believe I told you, I had made her a tender
‘ of my services ; to which her reply was, that she
‘ would think how she could use them, and would

E 3

‘ inform

‘ inform me of the result of her deliberation. At
‘ our next meeting, which was on the day follow-
‘ ing, that when I told you I had been with her,
‘ she said, that if, as I shewed a disposition to assist
‘ her, I would practice a very little innocent de-
‘ ceit, she should not despair of success. I desired
‘ to know what it was, and learnt, that her scheme
‘ was this : that I should, as she would, feign to
‘ consent to the marriage, and visit at the house,
‘ that I should urge, as if hopeless of escaping, a
‘ precipitate conclusion, which she would promote,
‘ by fixing an early day : she said she knew her
‘ father would object to the want of formality ;
‘ but that this might be overcome by my declaring
‘ that, if it were not conducted as I chose, I should
‘ hold myself disengaged ; that, when the settle-
‘ ment was to be adjusted, a temporary and general
‘ agreement might, in order to save time, be signed,
‘ and I might take of Mr. Ecklow a bond for her
‘ fortune, which I could transfer to Colonel Der-
‘ ville. Thus he would secure her, without ha-
‘ zarding the loss of what her father would give
‘ her.

‘ In an unhappy hour I was prevailed on, though
‘ I did not like the imposition, to enter into the
‘ scheme, for the consequences of which Miss Ec-
‘ klow and Colonel Derville took on themselves to
‘ be responsible : I pretended a fullen desperation
‘ and unwilling acquiescence. Neither my father
‘ nor

‘ nor Mr. Ecklow suspected us, matters were
‘ conducted as we had agreed ; and when I saw the
‘ Lady, to settle in what manner the ceremony
‘ should be performed, I found she and the Colonel
‘ had determined to be married at church, late in
‘ the evening, to take advantage of the twilight.
‘ The persons present were to be either such as
‘ did not know us, or such as were in the secret ;
‘ and I was to accompany Miss Ecklow : as Der-
‘ ville and I were not obviously unlike, and in the
‘ same regiment, it was not difficult to dress us so
‘ as to pass for each other : and as it happened that
‘ our Christian names were the same, we thought
‘ he might easily take my place. With this, how-
‘ ever, I was enjoined to intrust nobody ; and,
‘ aware that all depended on secrecy, I gave Miss
‘ Ecklow a promise, which she required, that even
‘ my dear Constance should be kept ignorant of it.

‘ The unfortunate Thursday when you left my
‘ sister’s, was the day appointed. You heard, I
‘ believe, that I was to dine at Mr. Ecklow’s : I
‘ went from Harley-street with Miss Ecklow, who
‘ had taken care to have with her only her brother,
‘ who knew of the project, and a friend or two,
‘ whom it was easy to deceive : her brother led
‘ her to the vestry, and I, under pretence of giv-
‘ ing some orders, went out : Derville then took
‘ my place ; and, as soon as the service was over,
‘ came out to see for the carriages ; when I re-
E 4 turned,

‘ turned to the vestry. Mrs. Derville and I got
‘ into my carriage, which, by a purposed mistake,
‘ went last. I ordered the coachman to turn down
‘ another street, and carried her to the house of a
‘ relation in Piccadilly, where Derville was wait-
‘ ing for her, and received her and the bond for
‘ her fortune, of me ; after which they immedi-
‘ ately set off for the country, and I returned to
‘ my sister’s, pleasing myself with the news I should
‘ carry you.

‘ I was mortified by hearing you were out, and
‘ and would not be at Mr. Gaynham’s till the next
‘ day at noon : I was afraid you should have an
‘ imperfect account of this business from some one
‘ else, and therefore sent to Mrs. Gaynham’s in
‘ Portman-square, to desire that I might see you
‘ early in the morning. Judge what were my
‘ feelings, when the servant came back and said,
‘ Mrs. Gaynham was removed to her new house,
‘ and that he could not learn any news of you
‘ there, she being gone to bed fatigued, and her
‘ people insisting on it, that nobody but the family
‘ had been there : I could not credit this account,
‘ though it alarmed me, and I immediately went
‘ thither myself ; I saw many of her servants,
‘ who all persisted in saying you had not been there,
‘ and they were so positive, that I began to fear,
‘ you had met with some accident in going, till
‘ they told me that there must be a mistake in the
‘ name,

' name, for that, so far was their mistress from
' having sent for you, that her chairmen had been
' all day employed in removing her furniture : my
' next supposition was that you must be at the house
' of some other friend, and that there was some unin-
' tellible blunder in the message : I therefore, after
' having called in Burlington-street, to inquire if
' you were come back, went to every place where
' I remembered ever to have seen or heard of your
' visiting. Thinking there was a remote chance
' that it might be Mrs. Stavenell who had sent
' for you, I called at her house, but could hear no-
' thing ; and it then occurred to me, that Lord
' Farnford had you : by this time it was near four
' in the morning, and I hastened again to Port-
' mon-square : I knocked up the porter, and asked
' for Lord Farnford, determined to see him, and
' not to quit the house without you ; but I was
' told he was and had been some days at Mount
' Felix : thither I resolved to go, and reached it
' before seven o'clock : the house was shut up, and
' the people in it denied his being there.

' What next to do I knew not ; yet still sus-
' pected you were with him, either at one of his
' houses, or at that of some one who wished his
' success : recollecting that the Brenville family
' had been his friends, I set off for their house,
' which was about seventy miles beyond Mount
' Felix, and arrived there early in the afternoon :

‘ I saw Lord George, who assured me he could
‘ give me no information, and with all possible
‘ expedition I came back to Portman-square : but
‘ it was day-light before I reached it. I again
‘ awakened the servants, and they then acknow-
‘ ledged their master was at home : his steward was
‘ a man I knew, and thought I could rely more
‘ safely than on his master ; I had him called up,
‘ told him my fears, and desired to be informed
‘ whether there was a possibility of your having
‘ been there : he, without hesitation, answered
‘ that there was none, that Lord Farnford was at
‘ that time just gone to bed ; but that, if I was
‘ not satisfied, he would go to him : I asked whe-
‘ ther he was sure that no lady **had** been at the
‘ house : he replied, many had, for that the com-
‘ pany had not been long gone from a ball and
‘ supper there. This convinced me, **that** I had
‘ no reason to fear him ; and, somewhat eased by
‘ the certainty that there was no other person
‘ whom I had so much cause to dread, I called on
‘ an acquaintance, to advise with him what steps
‘ I had best take to discover you : he knew part
‘ of what you had suffered from Lord Farnford,
‘ and before he gave me his advice, removed all
‘ my apprehension respecting him, by telling me
‘ it was confidently reported the preceding evening,
‘ by some who had been at his house, staid a short
‘ time, and then gone to Brookes’s, that he was
‘ mar-

‘ married ; but to whom was not yet known.——
‘ How little did I then suspect to whom ! When I
‘ I thought myself the most secure, I ought to have
‘ been the most alarmed.

‘ My friend advised my applying at Bow-street ;
‘ I did so, and in my way, I saw Lord Farnford
‘ at a distance. I then, without knowing why, re-
‘ turned to my sister’s, and —— you too well know
‘ the rest.—I learn from Harriet that her fears were
‘ lulled asleep by forged messages : it appears she sent
‘ to my house as soon as she heard that you were,
‘ notwithstanding what Mrs. Gaynham’s servant’s
‘ had said, with her ; but as I did not return to
‘ St. James’s Place all day, I know nothing of
‘ what passed, nor could any message from Mrs.
‘ Gaynham have made me easy, as I was well
‘ convinced she had not sent for you.

‘ I am astonished that I have been able to set
‘ down these particulars, for the recollection of
‘ them distracts me. On my return home I met
‘ your letter : what would I not give that I had
‘ seen it in time ! It has fully acquitted you ; I
‘ own myself alone to blame : had I persisted in
‘ demanding a search at Lord Farnford’s you had
‘ been safe, and I not miserable.

‘ What shall I say to you ? What comfort can I
‘ afford you, when I can find none for myself ? I
‘ am completely wretched : tell me you are so :
‘ reproach me as the cause, and thus crush me with
‘ misfortune.

‘ I would not arraign the decrees of Providence,
‘ nor will I doubt its mercy will soon deliver me
‘ from this insupportable burthen. I have settled
‘ every thing for my leaving this world, and shall
‘ in a few hours, sail for Gibraltar: there shall I
‘ find rest.

‘ Mr. Ecklow has forgiven Mrs. Derville; but
‘ my father is beyond measure exasperated at my
‘ having deceived him; he will not suffer me to
‘ take a last farewell of him: My poor sister! I
‘ am grieved for her, yet she ought to rejoice in
‘ hearing of my deliverance from such a situation:
‘ no one could wish me to continue in it.

‘ Thank God I have no heavy sin to answer for.
‘ I have endeavoured through my life to discharge
‘ the duties of my character, and hope my deficiencies will be pardoned. Notwithstanding all
‘ my affliction, I would not, even for the sake of
‘ possessing you, be the happy villain who has robbed me. What an account can he give? how
‘ will he face me at the throne of a just God?
‘ thither I appeal, and there shall I meet you:
‘ yes, my love, you shall be restored to me: you
‘ are my wife, and no separation shall we then fear:
‘ no farther evil shall reach us.

‘ Adieu—God blefs you—may he soon release
‘ you, and restore you in a better world, to

‘ Your faithful

‘ C A L O R N E.

Con-

Constance was offering a sacrifice of tears on this occasion, when Mr. Gaynham came to her door, and desired she would remain no longer alone. She obeyed the friendly request, and not being at all anxious to disguise her sorrow, she went with him down stairs, and suffered him to administer what consolation he thought best adapted to the case: he insisted on having the letter again, well knowing that at every interval she would pore over it, and injure her health.

The measure of her grief was already so full, that it would not contain any addition: after a few hours, she did not feel shocked at what Lord Calorne had written, and by the next day, she had again sunk into that calm melancholy which seemed now to be the natural temper of her mind.

C H A P. XIII.

PLAIN TRUTH.

ACCORDING to her agreement Constance went to Mount Felix, accompanied only by Mr. Gaynham, on the day Lord Farnford had named: her sensations while on the road thither were of the most painful kind, but she resolved not to give way to them: Lady Emma Peryton received her with an unfeeling joy, the Earl was all rapture and gratitude, while she answered the unacceptable congratulations of the one and the disgusting assiduity of the other, by those testimonies of sorrow which her misfortunes had made her language, sighs and tears.

Lord Farnford omitted nothing that could win her: he shewed her the house and gardens, which, though on a smaller scale, were not inferior to his larger estate in point of beauty, situation, and taste; but she was still less disposed to be pleased than when she was his guest on her journey to Marston-bury,

bury, and she was wholly incapable of admiration : he had given a dismal hue to every object she looked on, that it was Lord Farnford's was an insuperable bar to her liking it and, however desirous she was in all cases to judge candidly and impartially, she found that to shake of prejudices so founded as her's, was a more difficult task than it appeared.

At dinner it was intended that she should assume her place at the head of the table ; an honour which, very unwilling to anticipate the pain of seeing herself compelled to take the government of her family, she declined, and begged she might yet be considered as a guest ; in this she was indulged, and during the the entertainment she had no cause to complain of any addition to her uneasiness, excepting that her husband seemed to forget that there were other persons present equally entitled to his regard, his looks, and his conversation ; his eyes were incessantly fixed on her, she engrossed the whole of his attention ; he looked most provokingly happy, and was most nauseously kind.

In the afternoon, Mr. Gaynham, to whom it could not but be apparent, that whatever separated Lord and Lady Farnford would by the latter be deemed fortunate, drew him from her to see something at a greater distance from the house than she chose to go, and this left the sisters-in-law together. Lady Emma began a conversation expressive of her happiness in having so dear a friend allied to her,
and

and tried to persuade Constance that a disposition to be pleased was all that was wanting to her possessing complete felicity ; but there was neither such conviction in this argument, nor such fascination in the orator's rhetoric, as to alter an opinion supported by the evidence of feeling, that nothing short of what appeared morally impossible could ever restore to Constance the least portion of that tranquillity she had lost.

Lady Emma could not conceal her displeasure at the reception her endeavours met with, and by hinting that it could be only a desire to appear more nice than all the world, and an obstinate resolution to reject whatever good Lord Farnford offered her to which all the trouble he had had was owing ; she did what no common effort could, under such circumstances, have done, she made Constance angry, and most impolitically subjected herself to the humiliation of being told by one whose resentment she perhaps had not thought it possible to excite, that the share she had taken in this infamous business was such as no woman with feminine feelings would have accepted, and that nothing could ever obliterate the remembrance that for a great part of the misery of two people whom she professed a regard for, her ladyship would be called on to answer.

This was a new language to Lady Emma Peryton, whose ears had yet had no apertures, but for the voice of adulation and flattery ; the dye of conscience

science overcame the comparative paleness of her rouge, and her lips quivered while Constance accused her of insincerity and deceit, of having endeavoured to serve an unjustifiable purpose of her own by the arts of fraud and imposition, and of having been aiding in a scheme, which none but those who had lost all sense of honour and all regard for the welfare of their fellow-creatures, would have been engaged in.

The defendant, instead of asking the particulars of the charge against her, was beginning to deny them *in toto*, when Constance stopped her by saying there was nothing her imagination could suggest adequate to the purpose of convincing her she had formed an erroneous judgment; that she freely forgave *her*, as she had all her enemies, but that she must not be offended if her return of affectionate protestations was inferior to what her ladyship might expect, as she could not love where she could not trust, and had never yet been able to prevail on her lips to utter what her heart did not dictate. Lady Emma was then haughtily mute, and testified her indignation by bestowing a double quantity of her worthless regard on her lap-dog, till her brother and Mr. Gaynham returned, when she condescended to brighten her features and to disguise that she and her companion were found less dear friends than they had been left.

As the hour at which the carriage was ordered approached, Constance began to fear that Lord
Farnford

Farnford might not without a contest suffer her to leave, him and every time he spoke she dreaded hearing *that he had a right to detain her, and that Mr. Gaynham dared not take her away*; but her apprehensions were in a great measure removed by his requesting to know when he might fetch her from Oatham? It was a query she could not answer: had he asked when she *chose* he should fetch her, she could without hesitation have replied—Never! but being pressed to speak, she said she would consult Lady Harriet, and write to him; with this he was not satisfied; he told her Lady Harriet would consult Mr. Gaynham, and that therefore the shorter way, as he was present, was to settle it now. She was totally unprepared for such a determination, and put it off with answering, that if Mr. Gaynham would give his lordship an invitation to dinner, every thing should be then agreed upon: he could obtain no more, and therefore submitted to wait four days, when he was to be allowed to see her, and the marriage articles signed.

He suffered her to depart in peace: his presence obliged Lady Emma, while her own talent for dissimulation enabled her, to behave as if nothing unpleasant had happened between her and Constance, who, rejoiced as much as she could be with any thing, at quitting the house, returned to her beloved friend Lady Harriet.

C H A P. XIV.

W R E T C H E D N E S S.

ON the following day she was cheered by a truly sympathizing letter from Mrs. Aistrey, and received one from Lord Drumferne, which by containing very good news, increased her regret at her separation from Lord Calorne : the navigation was now so forward, as to cease to be precarious, and she was strongly invited to be present on the first day of the next year, when the first vessel was to come up within sight of Marstonbury ; the toll was adjusted, and the people of the country were so well aware of the advantage accruing from this easy method of conveyance, that greater benefits might be expected than were at first hoped for. It had always been computed, that the proprietors would receive twelve per cent. for their money, which would produce Sir Edward Fitzarthur's heiress an annual income of eighteen hundred pounds. This, it was imagined, as the utility of the undertaking became more known, would increase ; the timber on his estate would now be sold at a considerably greater profit, and her affairs wore at this juncture a very promising aspect : she was not insensible to the

the blessing, though its value was diminished by her incapacity to enjoy it, and she laid down her uncle's letter with the reflection—How happy would this have made Lord Calorne !

Previous to her meeting her husband again, it was necessary she should consult Mr. Gaynham and Lady Harriet on the subject she was most averse to thinking on ; and with some difficulty she prevailed on Lady Harriet to suffer her to mention it. Lord Farnford had proposed a re-marriage, to which, for her own sake she saw it fit to consent : where it should be, he left her at liberty to determine ; but for an action she so much abhorred, no scene was proper : the only place for which she had any partiality was the house she was in, yet she could not ask the friends who were insulted by her marriage to permit the ceremony to be performed there, nor would Lady Harriet, she soon found, acquiesce in such a wish ; for in the course of their consultation she prohibited what she termed—*the impious pollution* of Oatham church by a contract so offensive to Heaven.

To suffer Lord Farnford to fetch her to Mount Felix, was, on due deliberation, pronounced the least objectionable alternative, and to this she sorrowfully yielded, intreating Lady Harriet to go there with her, since she was the only friend she could ask to support her ; but this she could not obtain : the answer she received was by the tears that started in Lady Harriet's eyes ; she turned away

away from her, and Mr. Gaynham said, he was afraid she must not press it.

With this melancholy prospect, unalleviated by hope, comfortless, solitary, and embittered by whatever was painful to the mind, she prepared to utter her own condemnation, and saw Lord Farnford arrive, on the day named, with accumulated horror and increasing detestation: triumphant joy was the characteristic of his countenance; he came to claim his conquest, and to learn when he should be put in possession of his captive, the languor of whose features, and the testimonies of whose sorrow, did not at all repress the ardor of his exultation.

With a degree of agitation that would have wrung pity from a statue, with streaming eyes and trembling fingers, she took the pen from Lord Farnford and almost illegibly subscribed the deed that offered her a valueless bribe in lieu of the exalted the permanent happiness she had hoped for: the persons whose attendance had been necessary were then dismissed, and his lordship's next business was to inquire when he was to reap the harvest of his villainy.

Lady Harriet, as before, absented herself, and Mr. Gaynham remained with Constance, whose sobs and tears so convulsed her as to render impossible her satisfying the earl's impatient curiosity; she had fixed no time—she could fix none; she could say nothing more than—‘ You have been too cruel
to

‘ to——you leave me only submission !’——and then looking at Mr. Gaynham—‘ do tell him what we agreed on, for I cannot.’

“ That any man can be satisfied,” said Mr. Gaynham, “ with lifeless charms, without the heart, is to me a matter of astonishment :—Lord Farnford you must, though I acknowledge your right, give up this wretched young woman, at least so far as respects her living with you : the consequences, notwithstanding all your care, will I am satisfied be fatal to her : you see this is no caprice, no variation, but a rooted dislike, and such as is too justifiable to be conquered ; it is aggravated by regret, by reflection, that you are the cause of all the sorrow she knows ; and she is, I fear, already dying of a broken heart : it will be brutality to compel her, it will be murder : she must live separated from you.

“ His Lordship, with the sternest aspect and in the most forcible mode of expressing his resolution, sent himself to the perdition into which he seemed, without this acquiescence, precipitating himself, if he consented to her living apart from him, and firmly protesting that, were his intentions to be opposed, he would exert the authority with which the legislature had furnished him, and immediately carry her home, she begged Mr. Gaynham to suffer her peaceably to submit, and to discharge the
“ duty

“ duty she had accepted : she then told him that he
“ must fetch her, but could not bring herself to name
“ any time ; he therefore proposed the day after the
“ next, to which she, following the natural impulse
“ of her aversion, objected, and insisted on being al-
“ lowed a fortnight : he would not consent to so
“ long a delay, and therefore that day se’nnight was
“ fixed on.

“ It was agreed, or rather resolved by his Lord-
ship, for his wife had no share in the part of the
determination, that he should be with her in the
morning, dine with her, and set out in the evening
for Mount Felix, where they should be married,
before a sufficient number of witnesses : this was
the only point that had not been previously settled,
and Constance saw now every circumstance in as
fair a train to complete her misery, as the most
inveterate enemy could have wished. Mr. Gayn-
ham, from motives of mere charity, promised to
go with her, and this was the only shadow of sup-
port she could expect : she learnt that Lady Emma
was to meet her at Mrs. Stavenell’s ; and, being
already too wretched to heed trifles, she answered
her husband’s desire, to know that this would be
perfectly agreeable to her, by saying she was indif-
ferent to every thing.

He left her, with the warmest expressions of af-
fection, with an exulting joy, that this was his
last separation from her, and with a civil hint, that
he

he should admit of no apology for her disappointing him ; and Constance saw him drive from the door, with the most ardent wishes, that her eyes might be closed for ever before his return.

Not one moment during the succeeding night, could she forget her sorrows, nor could she, by ruminating on them, strengthen herself to bear them. The degree of hope she had entertained, that something might intervene to save her, was small and foundationless ; but it was now totally extinct, and she had no one consideration to cheer her. She was in herself inexpressibly wretched, and she was afflicted many ways. Mr. Gaynham had yet heard nothing of Lord Calorne, and Lady Harriet's anxiety was not to be soothed, yet her regard for her friend so constrained her, that it was only her countenance and deportment that declared she was unhappy : the two ladies seldom met, excepting when it was necessary, for each was too well aware of their being unfit companions, to indulge even in what might have gratified each.

That portion of her health which Constance had recovered, was insufficient to withstand her mental disorder ; and she, without the least tincture of regret, felt herself hourly weakened by a slow fever : this indication of a release in prospect, could only have been more heartily welcomed, had it come on with a quicker pace, and she would willingly have endured the acutest pain, to have ended her life where she was.

As

As she spent much of her time with Mr. Gaynham, her declining health was perceptible to him: and as she had done all that good sense and a steady resolution could do, reasoning had no effect.— From Lord Farnford's well-known temper, it was to be feared, that, should his wife be dying when he came to fetch her, he would not relinquish his purpose; she therefore at the entreaty of her friends, was attended by a physician: but from medicine she derived no other benefit, than as it was nourishment which she rejected in the form of food: her countenance now wore a different aspect; it was still languid and pale, but so much did she enjoy her approaching emancipation, that it was irradiated by hope, and frequently brightened into a placid smile.

Whatever she did, was with a view to her dissolution; and apprehensive that as she grew weaker, the faculties of her mind might be impaired, she settled her few temporal concerns with all possible expedition. As if she imagined that any would be productive of delay, she left nothing to omission to be done after her decease, and having no worldly care but to diminish the sorrow of her friends, with as much composure as any one would set out on a journey, she, at the age of twenty-two, prepared to quit a life, the last fifteen months of which had been productive of trouble to have alloyed the happiness of an age.

From a state of tranquillity which she had enjoyed three days, she was, on the morning preceding that of Lord Farnford's expected arrival, awakened by the horror which stared her in the face, and her grief was less calm : she was in hysterics for some hours. Lady Harriet could now no longer either disguise her feelings, or avoid being with her, and Constance's agonies were rendered intolerable by seeing the distress she occasioned.

C H A P. X V.

M Y S T E R Y.

THE last day of her residence at Oatham was now very near it's conclusion, and, on that following, the incongruous union was to be completed. —After supper, and just as Constance and the family

mily were about to part, they were alarmed by a violent ringing at the gate, which was succeeded by the noise of a carriage: Mr. Gaynham went to the window, but it was too dark to discern any object.

—Presently somebody entered the house, and asked loudly and hastily for Lady Farnford: Mr. Gaynham then saying to Constance,—Don't you be frightened, it is Lord Farnford's voice:—was going out of the room, when his Lordship came in: his wife involuntarily rose, while he, instantaneously approaching her, and grasping her hand, said, —Forgive my coming to you: don't be alarmed: I wished much to see you.—Then turning from her, she standing motionless with terror, he said, to Mr. Gaynham,—I could not rest without seeing her: you will forgive my coming so suddenly.

He was now asked to sit down; all was amazement; he appeared scarcely in his senses; and no other answer could be obtained to a question, which had been many times put to him, to know what was the cause of his journey, than that he wished to see Lady Farnford. He began an incoherent speech, endeavoured to lessen her evident terror, by assuring her, she had nothing to fear, and that he did not think of coming until about three hours before, or she should have known his intention; but that it was better to come so, than not at all.

Constance now supposed him drunk, yet his behaviour had more the appearance of insanity than of intoxication; he rivetted his eyes on her for some

moments, without speaking, he then repeated that he could not rest without seeing her, and all their attempts to procure satisfaction were fruitless: it seemed to be a sudden and very alarming frenzy.

A servant came in to tell him the horses were changed; he replied, it was very well, he was coming: but sat still talking very wildly: he professed his love for Lady Farnford, and his sorrow for having made her unhappy, saying often, he believed he was amply punished. This made her suspect he was jealous of her, and therefore had come so unexpectedly; yet nothing implied distrust. At last, after having staid near an hour and half, by which time it was considerably past midnight, he said,—I have no occasion to set off till four: Lady Farnford, shall I stay with you?—She could make him no answer, and Mr. Gaynham seeing that she was, as she had reason to be, afraid, replied for her,—Yes, stay by all means: we shall have another bottle of wine; but had you not better send your carriage away? Then getting up to ring the bell, he said in a whisper to Constance, as he passed her,—Don't be afraid; I will not leave you, if he does stay: this may be productive of good to you, for you shall not be deserted: I will take care of you, depend on me.

Lord Farnford had for some seconds, sat with his eyes fixed on the ground, from which position suddenly starting up, he said,—No, I will not stay; and yet catching his wife's hand, how am I to quit
you

you ? I must not stay ; I have many things to do ; things of importance to you.——Then looking earnestly at her, he said, My love, I am going to London : I hope to be back by to-morrow afternoon : would you go with me ?——Surely, interposed Lady Harriet, who had not yet spoken to him, you would not think of taking Lady Farnford to town to-night : you shall not indeed.—I must, he replied, I cannot stay : I cannot leave her : perhaps she will like to go.——But, said Mr. Gaynham, do you not consider how late it is ?——It is late, his Lordship answered ; but she shall be safe ; the servants are armed, and we shall be in town in two hours.——I would not have her go, returned Mr. Gaynham, on any account.——I am sure, something has disordered you. I cannot trust you with her.——You think, said her husband, mildly, that I have not the use of my reason—'tis true, she distracts me : were it not for her——what have I suffered !—but I cannot, I will not go without her : every thing depends on it ; she must go. I beg, I intreat her to go with me. O my dear love, what a tyrant I have been to you : I am grieved for you : I wish I had not done it.——Let me speak to her, said Mr. Gaynham.——You shall not then, interrupted the Earl, dissuade her from going.——Well, I will not, he replied, and then went out of the room with her.

Though her terror was very great, it had re-animated her, and, by detaching from her remembrance the melancholy ideas that had occupied her, she was enabled to exert that part of her strength which, as having lain dormant, she imagined had deserted her.——Mr. Gaynham asked her what she thought of doing, and whether she felt inclined to risque going with Lord Farnford.——Not if I can by any means avoid it, she replied:——I should be terrified to death, for he seems to me to be mad:—if he insists on it I have no alternative.——Good Heaven! what is to become of me?——You have an alternative, rejoined her friend, for, if your going will be attended with any danger that I cannot guard you against, I will not let him take you;—but if you think it more prudent to honour him than to oppose him, I will, for your perfect security, order my carriage and follow you immediately: one of my men shall ride by the side of his chaise, and on the least alarm I will, at the hazard of my life, protect you.

That no probable accident could render her situation worse, was a consideration that abated Constance's fears: should Lord Farnford really be mad, and murder her, he ridded her of a comfortless existence, and she had nothing to dread but what she had foreseen ever since their last meeting: she therefore thanked Mr. Gaynham for his kindness, and desperately resolving to accompany Lord Farnford, returned to him, and found him walking

ing up and down in great perturbation, talking to himself, and entirely regardless of Lady Harriet, who was present.

When his wife entered, he suddenly stopped, and asked her what she had determined on: her courage drooped, and she answered,—If I knew your reason for wishing me to go, I would judge whether it is safe for me.—Is it not sufficient, he hastily rejoined, to say I *must* take you with me? What are you afraid of? am not I your husband? You think me mad: you have made me so: Lady Farnford, you must go: I will not go without you: you will perhaps repent refusing me: on my honour you shall not, complying with my request.—Then I will go, she replied, if you will stay till I can get ready.—Certainly, said he, but make haste: you know not what an obligation you confer on me: you will know soon, and you shall be rewarded.

She would not have detained him five minutes, had not Mr. Gaynham followed her out of the room, and advised her changing her gown, for her habit, in order to afford time for his horses to be put to the carriage, as, if he did not go with her, the protection he offered her, would be of no use: she was past fear of any kind, but would not decline his kindness, and therefore went up stairs with Lady Harriet, who strongly dissuaded her from so dangerous an acquiescence. Mr. Gaynham sent to her that he was ready, and, unable to take

leave of Lady Harriet, she returned alone to the parlour, and told Lord Farnford she was prepared to go.

Mr. Gaynham was not in the room; his Lordship was sitting, leaning on a table, and did not seem to attend to her during two or three minutes, an interval which, though short, afforded ample time for her fears to muster again; she dreaded she scarcely knew what, and could not repeat the profession of obedience; he looked at her, and then starting from his seat, said,—No, it would be cruelty in the extreme. I wish I could have postponed going; but it is better not; for, though Lady Farnford, you do not love me, I will not aggravate your distress. I will never punish you:—you shall not go to town:—you shall hear from me.—I will leave you here: if possible, I shall be with you at the time we agreed on; if not, you will conclude——but you shall hear: supposing I were ill, and begged you to come to me, would you come?—Yes, Lord Farnford, she replied, I would indeed: be kind to me, and only reflect on your cruelty to me, and I will do what I can.—You are an angel, cried his Lordship, you will make me repent, if you are so good: I have not deserved the least consideration; but forgive me; I was determined to have you at any rate: I am sorry for it, but I cannot give you up: any thing else I would do. You shall not go. I will go alone: and, my love, when we meet next——but you shall hear from me.

He then rang the bell, and ordering his servants to be ready, came up to Constance, to bid her farewell : he grasped her hand, and earnestly said, I am punished for what I have done : I stand in need of support, and I have none. O my wife ! I cannot renounce you : but I will not grieve you : you will know it afterwards. I am a coward : had I the approbation of my conscience, I should not fear. One parting kiss, Lady Farnford, may I ask it ? you have yet refused me ; but surely you will not now.

She was really affected by his extraordinary emotion, and her aversion began to give ground ; she pitied him, she was struck with the solemnity of his adieu, and voluntarily offered to go with him ; but he said she should not.—An idea now entered her imagination while he stood with his arm thrown round her waist, regarding her with fixed attention, that compunction had overcome his ardour, and that he designed to quit her for ever : it was not love that she felt for him, it was compassion, it was tenderness, and, stifling the remembrance of her injuries, she wept at seeing a creature of the same species unhappy : she now no longer knew herself as Lord Calorne's Constance, she was Lord Farnford's wife ; and as in that station it was her duty to contribute to his ease, as well as her natural wish to extend benevolence, she unhesitatingly assured him she freely forgave what was past, and, would he treat her

kindly, that she would strive to conquer every prepossession.

As proud a heart as ever was formed was humbled, an unbounded wish for gratification was repressed, an innate stubbornness became flexibility, and Lord Farnford was repentant at the moment when he had succeeded in softening Constance.— The servant came in to tell him his attendants were ready ; he wrung the hand he seemed to have forgotten was that of another, and, unable to speak, retired abruptly to his carriage.

CHAP. XVI.

CHARITY.

MR. Gaynham presently came to Constance who was in a maze of astonishment, and asked her if she could not trust herself with Lord Farn-

Farnford that he was gone alone; she told him he would not let her go, he replied that he was glad of it, for though to offend him was dangerous, he was not satisfied with her going.——Lady Harriet was now informed of her friend's escape, and, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, they spent some time in conversing on this extraordinary visit.

It had impressed Constance's mind too forcibly to admit rest, and various reflections disturbed her: she was not perfectly sure that her condescension was justifiable, for, no longer worked on by the sight of Lord Farnford's distress, she began to think she had injured Lord Calorne in suffering herself to be so moved; but against this she opposed the consideration that if her fidelity to him prevented her discharging the duty she had undertaken, it ceased to be a virtue; and she was soothed by a belief that, were he a spectator of her conduct, he would prefer her acting conscientiously to an obstinate and embittering regard to him.

At breakfast next morning the late interruption was again the topic, but to what Lord Farnford's so sudden coming was to be attributed could not be agreed; Constance still imagined he meant his visit as a final farewell, in which opinion she was supported by calling to mind the circumstances of his behaviour, and the incoherent solemnity of what he had said; Mr. Gaynham did not think with

her, but could find no other cause ; while Lady Harriet was confident he was mad. A short time proved that, if Constance's conjecture was not right, it was nearly so, and all that appeared mysterious was accounted for.

A little before noon, Mr. Gaynham came to the two ladies, who were in the nursery, and proposed as the day was gloomy, and no more than moderately warm, their taking an airing : he had been in the room a very few minutes, when his attention was drawn by seeing a man ride furiously toward the house, who, throwing himself from his horse, rang violently at the gate. Mr. Gaynham turned to Constance, and said,—Here is one of Lord Farnford's servants, if I am not mistaken : I will go down and learn his business : he then went away, and Constance, without knowing why, began to tremble. Her suspense was soon at an end : Mr. Gaynham returned presently, and making her sit down, he desired her not to be alarmed, told her Lord Farnford had sent for her to town, and offered to go with her.—And why has he sent for me ? she asked.—He is ill, returned Mr. Gaynham.—He ! she repeated : he said last night, would I come to him, if he were ill : I will go immediately.—Stay, said Mr. Gaynham, I have ordered the carriage : you must summon all your reason and fortitude, Lady Farnford, for you will be shocked to see him unprepared : he has fought a duel.—He is dead, then, she replied.—No. Mr. Gaynham rejoined, he is not ; but he is wounded,
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and begs to see you.—And with whom has he fought? can it be with Lord Calorne? were the next questions: they were answered, and Lady Harriet's rising colour subsided by naming Lord George Brenville. Constance expressed her sorrow for Lord Farnford, earnestly hoping, that, whatever she might suffer, one so unfit to die might be spared, and was to a very great degree anxious to set out. As soon as they were summoned to the chaise, she parted from Lady Harriet; and, having left orders with Kitty to follow her, she quitted Oatham with Mr. Gaynham.

They reached Portman-square by three o'clock, and on entering the house she could with difficulty keep from fainting. Lord Farnford's surgeon was told she was arrived, and in a few minutes came down to her: he and Mr. Gaynham went out of the room together, and in the mean time she learnt, from one of the servants, that his Lordship alarmed them all by coming there at day-break, that he continued up and alone till five o'clock, when he went out with a gentleman who had called on him; that he had been brought home in about an hour, senseless and bleeding, and recovering the use of his intellects, had ordered Lady Farnford to be sent for.

Mr. Gaynham returned, and told her the surgeon thought the wound not mortal, and that the Earl might safely see her, which perhaps he would do directly, as a message was gone to let him know
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she was in the house.—I hope, said Constance, he will not die ; indeed I do not wish it.—You are very good, Mr. Gaynham answered ; but you must compose yourself : I dare say he will be very eager to see you ; and any agitation that you would discover would make him worse, She promised to endeavour at being calm : and Lord Farnford's gentleman came to tell her his Lordship begged she would come to him instantly.

As far as the room adjoining that where her husband lay, Mr. Gaynham accompanied her, and then, exhorting her to courage, when he thought her tolerably firm, he suffered her to proceed : she went to the bedside, and kneeling down, at the sight of Lord Farnford, burst into tears : he was told she was there, and opening his eyes said,—My love, you were very kind to come :—but I do not deserve your pity :—he was too weak to say any more, and she, fearful of disturbing him, retired, and went to Mr. Gaynham who was talking to the surgeon.

The ball which had lodged in his side had been extracted in two hours after he received it, and as no very unfavourable symptoms appeared, hopes were entertained that in a few days he would be out of danger.——Constance could not think of leaving the house till this was nearer a certainty, however disagreeable staying might be to her ; but when Mr. Gaynham said that he would trust to the moon-light for his return to Oatham, she could not

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conceal that to be left in such a situation was a very severe affliction :—he therefore offered to remain in town, promised to see her often, and desired that she would make no scruple of sending for him at any time.

In the evening Lord Farnford requested to see her again :—she went, but he was too weak to utter any more than broken sentences expressive of his love for her, and his sense of her goodness : he seemed anxious to know if she meant to stay with him and pleased with her assuring him she would : his wound was dressed again when she quitted his room, and bore no worse an appearance than before.

Having convinced her of the necessity of her going to bed, and promised to breakfast with her the next morning, Mr. Gaynham about midnight went home to Burlington-street, and she followed his advice ; but gave the servants orders to call her if Lord Farnford grew worse or intimated a wish to see her.—The fatigue she had undergone procured her a little rest ;—she sent to inquire after Lord Farnford and her anxiety was increased by hearing he had passed the night very ill : on the arrival of his surgeon, however, her newly raised fears were allayed ; inquietude was a natural consequence of the pain of his wound, and, on the whole, he did not think him worse than the day before.

At the hour he had named Mr. Gaynham came to her ; and at breakfast he asked her if he should send

send for Lady Harriet.—If it had happened that Lady Harriet had been in town, she answered, I should have been glad ; but I would not have her fetched to such a scene.—She will dine with you, said Mr. Gaynham, she knows your distress by this time, and I am certain will not delay setting out; I have told her to provide for remaining perhaps some weeks in town, so that you may always have her when you wish it.

This was a very great consolation, and Constance was extremely thankful for it: it cheered her and enabled her to go to Lord Farnford at noon, when he desired to see her, in rather better spirits: he could say little more than what he had before repeated, excepting that on her asking him if she should let Lady Emma know he was wounded, he replied, that she was with Mrs. Stavenell and that one of his servants who came from Mount Felix with him was gone to her.

Before four o'clock, Lady Harriet arrived; she had not been to Burlington-street, but had her children in the coach: these she sent away, and staid herself with Constance. Her Ladyship had formed a magnified idea of Lord Farnford's danger, and could not forbear hinting to his wife, that there was a prospect of release, till she answered, that her wishes for his recovery were sincere, and begged that nothing might be said to render them less earnest.

As to confine both Mr. Gaynham and Lady Harriet was needless, Constance told him that, if one of them would, when it was not very inconvenient to them, be with her, she should be perfectly satisfied: it was therefore agreed, that the latter should be the resident in Portman-square, that she should go home at some time every day, to see her children; and, as she could not be easy if they were left at night with only servants, Mr. Gaynham was to sleep in Burlington-street.

Dinner was just over, when Constance was summoned to Lord Farnford; she found him better than she had expected; he made her sit down on his bed, and would have talked to her, had not his surgeon come in, and advised him to remain quiet, notwithstanding which he would not suffer her to go, but holding her hand, looked wishfully at her, and reiterated his acknowledgements of obligation.

His side was to be dressed, and she left him, desiring to know what judgment was formed of it: this was very favourable, and she heard with a degree of pleasure, which resulted from her own benevolence, that if he continued as well through the next day, the greatest danger was over.

That Lady Harriet was not delighted with this account, was indubitable; but Mr. Gaynham, who with admiration saw the disinterested and truly charitable concern of one so injured for the murderer of her peace, endeavoured to make her exalted generosity contribute to her ease, by saying
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whatever could familiarize to her, the idea of living with her husband, who it was not to be expected would again permit her to leave his house. The hope that he might recover to the purpose of repentance and amendment made her own gloomy prospect tolerable :—she had already given up every thing she valued in this world, and must strike out a new path for her passage through it.—Convinced that none which deviated from the strictest rectitude could be worthy of pursuit, she sedulously sought that, and resolved, without any other aim than that of approving herself to him whose protection had hitherto supported her, inflexibly to follow it.—She flattered herself Lord Farnford's confinement might be made useful to him, and determined if his recovery was slow to take advantage of it to make him think.

He rested better this night than that preceding, and was considerably mended in the morning : he continued so all day, and saw his wife frequently, it being advised that he should rather see her often for short intervals than exhaust himself by talking, to which he was much inclined.—Lady Harriet went home for two hours, during which time Mr. Gaynham supplied her place, and they remained with Constance for the remainder of the day.

Between six and seven in the evening, arrived Lady Emma Peryton and Mrs Stavenell, a circumstance which did not delight Constance, though she could not but approve their coming : they were
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shewn into the room where she and her friends were, and neither of the visitors looked pleased with the party : Mrs. Stavenell eagerly asked how Lord Farnford was, while his sister, with a stiff reserve and a very ill timed haughty remembrance of the difference she had had with Constance, rang for a servant and bid him inquire whether she might see her brother.

It was naturally to be expected, however little to be wished, that they, would remain as companions to their niece and sister-in-law, and while they were gone to Lord Farnford's chamber Mr. Gaynham imagining they intended to do so, asked Constance if his wife's being in Burlington-street would not be the more agreeable ; but this was not consented to ; the two ladies were by no means a compensation for the absence of such a friend, and she begged that whatever they did, might not alter the plan agreed on.

All doubts on this head were soon removed ; Lady Emma on her return from her brother declined staying even to tea, and Mrs. Stavenell, who might justly fear hearing more than she chose from Lord Calorne's relations, went away with her.

CHAP.

C H A P. XVII.

D E L I V E R A N C E.

BEFORE the day closed it produced Constance a more important support and a greater degree of pleasure than she could have hoped for.—Mr. Carwell had suddenly returned, to town, and sent a message desiring to know if he might wait on Lady Farnford.—Mr. Gaynham, who was with her when it came, went back with the servant, and in less than an hour brought him to Portman-square, having in their way thither informed him in general of the situation of affairs there.

This was the greatest gratification she had experienced since the commencement of her misfortunes, and she begged earnestly that it might not be diminished by his leaving her, as his presence would be useful and beneficial in the highest degree: the business on which he came to town was Lord George Breville's who had been obliged to abscond lest his antagonist's wound proved mortal; the family were dispersed, Lady George, whose
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conduct was the ground of the quarrel, was sent to her relations, her children were taken from her and left at the country house, while their scarcely-to-be-pitied father was seeking a nook of the world to hide himself in. Mr. Carwell's residence therefore in Grosvenor-street was not indispensable, and, on the assurance that Lord Farnford would not be offended, he complied with Constance's invitation, after having obliged her to promise that she would, without ceremony, make him as serviceable as he could be.

It was midnight when she and her friends retired to their chambers: in going thither she called in at Lord Farnford's room, to inquire after him, and was sorry to hear he was awake, and not so well as he had been earlier in the day: she went to his bedside, and found him much changed, his wound was very painful, the accession of fever was greater than it had been, and she thought it fit that his surgeon should see him; he was sent for, and her fears that his danger was increased were confirmed. The physician who had attended her in her illness, was fetched; and he, knowing how little reason Constance had to wish for Lord Farnford's life, when he returned from his visit to him, told her, without hesitation, that his recovery was not only doubtful, but improbable, since his wound, though externally healing, was within in an alarming state of inflammation: she received these tidings, which were communicated in the adjoining room, with a degree
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of horror that convinced the physician he was mistaken in supposing she would accept liberation at such a price, and had not recovered the command of herself, when Lord Farnford desired she would come to him.

Opiates had been given him, which had failed of the salutary effect intended, and he was in a dreadful delirium : he would not suffer her to stir from him, but raved incessantly till six in the morning, when he fell into a doze ; and she, most heartily wearied, went to lie down : but she could not rest ; Lord Farnford dying without opportunity to reflect on his sins, and perhaps without inclination to look forward to eternity, was an image perpetually before her eyes ; and, as soon as she heard Mr. Carwell was stirring, she went down, and requested to speak with him.

He concurred in her opinion, that at the next lucid interval, Lord Farnford should be warned of his danger, and offered to make him a visit, if she would introduce him : it was agreed, that when she next saw him, she should tell him Mr. Carwell was in the house, and urge his admitting him to a conversation.

Lady Harriet's grief at hearing Lord Farnford's recovery was again dubious, was only the reflection of Constance's, and she went home as usual after breakfast, anxious because her husband had been absent without sending an excuse, and without
having

having mentioned any engagement that would detain him: she had been gone a very short time, when Constance was told the Earl was awake, and had intimated a wish, that she would come to him. She never deferred a moment obeying his summons, and on her entrance, found him composed and drowsy; but when he looked up, she was shocked by the disorder of his countenance: he held her by the hand with all his strength, complained of very great pain, yet was not sensible enough to know whence it proceeded.

The arrival of his surgeon released Constance, who, as she was going down stairs, met Mrs. Stavenell and Lady Emma Peryton; she gave them an account of Lord Farnford, and dissuaded them from seeing him: after this they staid but a short time; and, almost as soon as they were gone, Lady Harriet returned. When she came into the room, it was evident that she had been crying, and her looks foreboded some unwelcome news. Constance asked her what affected her; but Lady Harriet bursting into tears, turned from her, and could only say, My brother—O Lady Farnford, my brother.

It was impossible for Constance to administer any comfort on such an occasion; she stood in need of all consolation herself, and found it difficult even to intreat farther information. After a few minutes of the most torturing suspense, Lady Harriet, suppressing her tears, told her that when she went home,
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she met a letter from Lord Calorne, which he had written almost in the agonies of death ; that he had been shot by a musket ball in the attempt to land ; and that he entertained no doubt of being dead before the news could reach England. Lady Harriet could say no more, excepting that Mr. Gaynham had taken the letter from her, and then her tears drowned her voice. The fortitude of her auditor though vigorously exerted, was not equal to the blow ; she was silent, and dropped in a fainting fit into the nearest chair. Happily at that instant, Mr. Carewell came in, and finding common methods ineffectual to her recovery, he sent to Lord Farnford's surgeon, who was still in the house, and brought her to herself.

The first shock being over, Constance became calm ; and, seeing that her companion was not to be soothed, she advised her going home, hoping that Mr. Gaynham's power over her was greater than her's or Mr. Carwell's : with this, after some solicitation, she complied, and Mr. Carwell went with her.

This interval of solitude was beneficial to Constance, who sat down wholly to reflect on this new calamity : her sorrow was great in proportion to her regard for the object regretted, yet she could not but own that to him death was an extension of mercy. Her contemplations were soon disturbed by the entrance of the surgeon, who came to inquire after her, and to tell her that the Earl's fever having abated

abated considerably had left him perfectly sensible.

——Then your hopes of him increase, said she.

—He shook his head and replied that there was a possibility but not a probability of his recovery, for that a mortification was every hour expected.—Is he aware, she asked, of his danger?——No, Madam, answered the gentleman, he does not seem to think himself so bad as he is.—But you will not suffer him to remain ignorant of it? Constance rejoined.—I do not know how to tell him of it, said his surgeon, unless he asked me my opinion.—He must be told of it, replied Constance; it is very improper that he should continue in this state of mind;—I could not justify it to myself, whatever may be the consequence of telling him of it: may I see him?

She was answered that she might, and therefore immediately went, with a determination to let him know at least *her* sentiments: he was calm and rational, very much pleased with her coming to him, and in less pain than before: she sat down by him and looked at him with the utmost pity; when, perceiving her eyes fill, he took her hand and asked her why she cried:—I am sorry, said she, to see you so ill.—You are by far too kind to me, he replied, do not afflict yourself: I am better than I was last night:—they tell me I must have patience for three or four days, and I will have patience, since you are so good and so attentive to me.

It was now apparent that he had been flattered and buoyed up with false hopes : to undeceive him was a very painful task, but not to do it was cruel : he said to her ; You think me worse than I am :—I am undoubtedly better than when you left me, my pain is less and my fever is less.—I hope you are better, answered his monitor : but it is good to be prepared.—Why ? he replied hastily, you do not think me in any danger, do you ?—I am no judge of your situation, said she, yet, till your wound heals favourably, I cannot think you safe.—I knew, rejoined he, that you thought me worse than I am :—nobody else says I am in danger :—you are low spirited and will make me so.—No, said Constance, all I wish is that you may be prepared for whatever may happen ; that can do no harm.—It can, he replied fiercely, for the idea of dying would distract me : you would persuade me I am in danger when I am not : they say as soon as the inflammation ceases I shall mend very fast.—Constance's design was to warn, not irritate him : and finding him in a disposition that might render any farther urgency injurious to his health, she left him.

She went to Mr. Carwell and reported to him, how ill she had prospered : he commended her desisting, and advising her to renew the subject at every visit, and to forbid the attendants to express hopes which they did not entertain : her troubles were now so great that company was no restraint on her, and throwing herself on a chair she cried bitterly.—

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All her endeavours to confine her grief solely to Lord Farnford were ineffectual, he who had long possessed her warmest affections claimed a remembrance, and though she listened to Mr. Carwell's remonstrances, and was convinced that it was a release which she ought not to lament, humanity was not immediately to be conquered, nor could her sorrow be condemned.

Before dinner, Mr. Gaynham came to ask her consent to his keeping Lady Harriet at home till the next day, as her passions were too much moved to leave her the command of herself. Constance readily acquiesced, and then mentioned Lord Calorne's death to Mr. Gaynham, begging to see his letter: though she assured him he might safely shew it her: he for some time declined it, till she wholly and firmly reminded him, that, as being acquainted with the contents, nothing in it could shock her: he then gave it her, standing by her, ready to snatch it out of her hand if he discovered any alteration in her countenance, but her fortitude proved sufficient, and she read, with no other ill consequence than an increase of her tears, the following words:

' Dear Harriet,

' Rejoice in the thought that before
' this reaches you, your wretched brother is at ease:
' I own myself weak and rash—I could not bear up

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' under

‘ under such accumulated misfortunes.—I fought
‘ death and a friendly musket ball brought it to me,
‘ an ineffectual opposition was made to our landing,
‘ I saw the man before me drop : never before did
‘ I feel envy ; I moved his bleeding body from
‘ it’s fortunate post, and taking it, was success-
‘ ful.

‘ I have lingered an age with a slowly consum-
‘ ing fever ; but to-day all chance of my recovery
‘ is removed : my wound is not important, it is a
‘ mental disorder I die of. There is but one thing
‘ I wish in this world—could I see my Constance go
‘ before me, and then could I see her enter Hea-
‘ ven, for thither her pure spirit will fly.

‘ The governor knows my desire to be buried
‘ in my native country : his cruel kindness, huma-
‘ nity, and attention have prolonged my life, and,
‘ had I unfortunately recovered, it would have been
‘ owing to his care ; he has promised I shall, if possi-
‘ ble be sent home.

‘ If you love me, and I am sure you do, you
‘ will not lament my death, I am happy in the pros-
‘ pect of it : break it to her gently, and — but per-
‘ haps she may long before this have been released.

‘ I die in charity. I forgive even my greatest
‘ enemy : may he repent ! By some means or other
let my father know for I am unable to write any
‘ more.

‘ CALORNE.’

From

From a second reading of the letter Constance might not have come off triumphant ; Mr. Gaynham therefore took it from her, and, she, lifting up her hands and eyes, said only,— Might I follow him ? he is happy.——He is, replied his brother-in-law, you must reflect on that, and Mr. Carwell will encourage you.——Harriet is quite overpowered ; her sensibility is great, and her passions at first violent : I hope, however, in a short time reason will get the better : all I can say is lost on her, she must be suffered to indulge her grief, and then I hope she will be calm.——He then told Constance he was going to attempt seeing Lord Ormington, in order that he might shew him Lord Calorne's letter, after which he thought it probable his resentment would cool, and he might deplore the catastrophe of his own plot.

Till the evening, Lord Farnford continued quiet, and then his fever and delirium returned : he several times alarmed those about him by his frenzy, and, the seeing him in such a state was too much for Constance, she forbore visiting him till he should again be sensible.

C H A P. XVIII.

C O M P U N C T I O N.

NO ray of reason appeared in Lord Farnford's mind till the next morning. At eight o'clock she went, at his request, to him, and she designed to improve this opportunity of convincing him, his security was imaginary : he several times asked her why *she* particularly was so apprehensive for him, and told her she was causelessly timid. With all possible care not to depress his spirits, she stated to him, that recovery from sickness was at all times precarious, as a thousand unforeseen changes might happen, and how dreadful a discovery that we had deceived ourselves by nourishing false hopes must be.—He heard her patiently, and then replied, that he had no idea of his situation being very alarming ; but that she might be perfectly easy, for he had settled all his affairs before he fought.—But, said Constance, surprized at his thinking he had nothing more to do, there are other things

things to be attended to—religion——: She was going undisguisedly to lay before him the imminent peril he was in, when he stopped her by answering, —My dear Lady Farnford, your notions and mine are very different: we have been very differently brought up: your head has been filled with a thousand idle fancies, which have contributed to make both you and me uneasy: you had at one time nearly infected me with them, but I have escaped vulgar prejudices, and will always exercise the privilege of thinking for myself.

Constance, thunderstruck at such an avowal of infidelity, knew not what to reply: but this trouble his Lordship spared her by desiring he might not be teased with lectures: he said people who thought as she did, were perpetually miserable, either regretting the past, or dreading the future, that it was this which made her unhappy, and such shackles would keep her so.

The horror which this discovery of his principles raised in Constance, incapacitated her from pursuing her intention; and, as he seemed rather displeased with her, she quitted him. She saw both his physician and surgeon, and strictly enjoined them not only to forbear saying any thing that might deceive their patient, but to tell him unreservedly their opinion: they promised to do so, and she resolved, at the very first opportunity afterwards, to mention Mr. Carwell,

A message from Burlington-street informed her that her two friends could not be with her till the evening, in consequence of which, when Mrs. Stavenell and Lady Emma called at noon; Constance invited them to dine with her. Hearing that she would have no other company than Mr. Carwell, who was a stranger to them, they agreed to stay, and Constance took the liberty of prohibiting their encouraging Lord Farnford in his error: his sister excited Mr. Carwell's contempt, by saying she thought it would be very foolish to do any thing to lower a sick person's spirits; but on an intimation that none so much his enemies would be allowed to see him, she replied, that she should only call on him to ask him how he did, and to let him see she did not forget him.

Her Ladyship's affection for her brother bore no similitude to that of Lady Harriet Gaynham for Lord Calorne, which she demonstrated by saying to Mrs. Stavenell, that, as Lord Farnford continued much as he had been, she should return home early and dress for the party she was engaged to. On this account, the ladies retired before seven, when finding on inquiry that his Lordship was inclined to slumber, and Mr. Carwell being obliged to go out, Constance yielded to her extreme weariness, and laid down on her bed, where she slept more than an hour, and on waking, saw Lady Harriet sitting by her.

She chid her, for suffering her to sleep after she
came

came in, and was pleased to see her less dejected than she imagined she would be: they went down stairs, and found Mr. Gaynham, who, as soon as Constance appeared, asked her if his wife had told her.——No, replied Lady Harriet, you must, for my heart beats so, I cannot speak twenty words. —Then sit down, Lady Farnford, said he, and prepare yourself to be astonished: I have a request to make to you from a stranger: In short, for I cannot preface what I have to say: Lord Ormington begs to see you.

Astonishing this was truly, and not a word could Constance for some minutes utter: at length she desired an explanation, and learnt these particulars: that Mr. Gaynham, failing of getting access to Lord Ormington, had called on Miss Greyburne, and communicated the last tidings of Lord Calorne; that, soon after, Lord Ormington, had sent to Burlington-street, desiring to have the perusal of the letter, which Mr. Gaynham, not chusing to expose his wife to a repulse, had himself carried, and for the first time since his marriage had been admitted to his father-in-law, who was confined to his bed by a very severe fit of the gout, and on whom Lord Calorne's death had had a proper effect.

Poor Lady Harriet could not bear the recital, and therefore left the room. Mr. Gaynham now without restraint, informed Constance of what had occurred in this interview, and with great satisfaction she heard, that the family breach was healed;

and Lady Harriet forgiven. Lord Ormington, when his heart was once softened, was easily convinced of his cruelty to his son and daughter; and, willing to acknowledge it, he was very earnest to see her, whom he as sincerely wished had been, as he was once, firmly resolved should not be Lord Calorne's wife. She had no objection to complying with his wish, but begged it might be postponed till Lord Farnford's fate was determined, and her anxiety thereby lessened. Lady Harriet was then called in, and it gave her husband and her friend great pleasure to perceive that this happy event was, in a degree, a counterbalance of her affliction.

Lord Farnford sent for Constance about ten o'clock, and then appeared worse than ever: her orders had been obeyed, and he was excessively dejected: he could only say feebly,—I am indeed very bad: you are all I regret leaving, and then his recollection forsook him. She stood by him, weeping; but finding he was not conscious of her being there, she went away, desiring to be sent for as soon as he knew any body.

Mr. Carwell was now at home, and she told him Lord Farnford was at last persuaded of his danger: wishing to improve the favourable turn, she sent to inquire how he was, but receiving for answer, that he was inclined to sleep, she would not disturb him, and therefore waited.

He

He slept near two hours; and, immediately on his waking, called for Lady Farnford: collecting all her fortitude and presence of mind, she returned to him with his messenger, and dismissed the attendants that she might speak more freely: he was in an agony not to be described, and scarcely to be born, with the retention of his senses: as soon as she was within his reach, he caught hold on her cloaths, to make her sit down by him, but his efforts to speak, were for an interval ineffectual. Constance was terrified and would have risen, had he not prevented her, and regaining the use of his tongue, begged her not to go.—I am glad to see you, said he; I have been in hell since you were here: they tell me I have been asleep: it is impossible, I could not sleep in such torments: there I was down, down, down, as low as I could be, and you were above: you would not look at me: why would you not? perhaps it might be a dream, and yet I cannot forget it. I feel the heat still. Oh what thirst and pain! and I was told I must be there, and you sent me: how could you be so cruel: it certainly was a dream, and yet I would do any thing to avoid such another. Lady Farnford, you said very truly that I was in danger. I am very bad indeed: I feel as if I could not last long? well, all will be over: I wish it was: but what do I fear? I can have no more such dreams. Oh you cannot conceive half the horror of the place! it

was light, and yet it was dark and black : every thing looked on fire ; and such groans ! I saw many that I knew : they could not bear it : and you seemed so happy and so unconcerned for me. I could see too, who was with you : I called to you and to him, but you would not hear. I struggled to get loose, for nothing held me, but I could not. Do not let me go to sleep again. Tell me it was a dream, and comfort me.

This was the juncture for Constance to begin on her stupendous work, and she shook with dread and horror : she paused, to give her intellects time to rally, and then firmly told his Lordship what he had seen was no dream, but a revelation of the future ; and a warning of the consequence of impenitent death : if you would avoid suffering, said she, beyond what your imagination has yet represented to you, you must repent of your sins, for believe me it is highly necessary to make the best use of your time.——Repent ? cried he, how am I to repent ?—I repent that I have made you unhappy, because from my soul I love you. I shall not die. I will not leave you ; nothing shall tear me from you :—yet they all say now I shall not recover :—why did they not tell me so at first :—they have deceived me, and you are my only friend ; for I am going apace : do you really think me in great danger ?

You are undoubtedly, answered Constance, while the tears gushed in torrents from her eyes,
very

very dangerously ill:—you must improve every moment that you are spared, and may God continue to you the power of reflection and give you ability to repent.—I deserve punishment, said Lord Farnford with a profound sigh, even such as I felt: I have been very wicked; but if there is a possibility of my escaping that horrid place, O, if you have any compassion, shew it me. I acknowledge the justice of such punishment, for if there can have been a witness of my actions, if my sins are recorded, as they told me they were, why should I not suffer for them? what claim have I to exemption? but I cannot bear such thoughts: there is a light breaking in on me; but it distracts me.

To cheer Lord Farnford without injudiciously encouraging him, to warn him without depressing him, and to keep alive a sense in him which was agonizing, was a truly difficult task, and more than Constance imagined herself equal to, she said what she thought best calculated to prepare him for the introduction of Mr. Carwell, and was rejoiced when she perceived that at hearing of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come he trembled; all her eloquence was exerted in representation and persuasion; she repeated her assurance of forgiveness of all that related to herself, and, kneeling by him, she implored that of the Supreme Power for him.

Animated by the hope of success, and flattered by his attention, his confession that his past life had
been

been criminal, and by other marks of contrition, she now declared herself incompetent to discharge the whole of the undertaking, and mentioned Mr. Carwell : his Lordship did not at first seem to relish being taught by any but herself, till she pleaded weariness and urged the absolute necessity of improving every moment while he had his recollection : he then yielded, on condition that she would not leave the room, and she sent for her co-adjutor.

Lord Farnford had that grand basis of reformation, good sense : he was not naturally vicious, but had been misguided in his pursuit of pleasure, and, this being the first illness he had ever known, he had had no more opportunity than inclination for reflection : his life had been one continued round of licentious indulgence, because no taste had been awakened in him for innocent amusements ; and he had embarked in the whirlpool of vice without touching on the coast of experience : his spirit was now tamed, and an hour's conversation with Mr. Carwell, whom he treated with respect and seemed to hear with attention, did much towards bringing his mind to a right temper : he was afterwards so exhausted as to make it proper to leave him, to which he very unwillingly consented, fearful that he should have another hated dream ; but on a promise that, if he did not appear to sleep easy, he should be waked, and that any summons from him should be instantly obeyed, he said he was satisfied.

Lady

Lady Harriet had gone to bed some time before; but neither Constance nor Mr. Carwell having the least desire to sleep, they agreed to sit up and wait a message from the Earl. About six in the morning he sent for his wife only, who on seeing him, and hearing he had slept quietly, began to hope that, if there was any change, it was for the better: this, however, she kept to herself lest he should relapse into indifference: he was perfectly sensible and calm, and had evidently encouraged a disposition to think: he talked to Constance in a most affectionate manner, expressed the deepest remorse for what he had made her suffer, and, not knowing of the letter Lord Calorne had written, told her he freely consented to her marrying in as short a space of time after she became a widow, as she chose.

This was not a topic on which Constance could converse; she cried, and informed Lord Farnford of the consequences of his compulsion of her: he seemed struck with terror at hearing of it, he exclaimed,—What? have I murder to answer for;—I have been a greater villain than I thought.—O you know not half my sins, nor do I know them: there is one: but I cannot tell it *you*: and yet you must be told of it, you will be shocked, and I cannot bear to see you afflicted: my Constance, when you hear it after my death, you will stand by my grave and curse me; yes, you shall know it, for
per-

perhaps you will, out of pity, say you pardon it. Send Mr. Carwell to me, and do you go to bed, for you look sadly fatigued : you are too kind to me : I think I feel easier ; but I will not hope : 'tis only your being with me : let Mr. Carwell come. I will send for you, my love, when I want to see you.

She was satisfied that Lord Farnford was better, and principally apprehensive that his contrition would end with his danger, and that

“ ——— ease would recant

“ Vows made in pain : ——— ”

she begged Mr. Carwell to be cautious of owning his sentiments of his health, if they concurred with her's : he went, and this time she thought would be most beneficially employed in endeavours to recruit her flagging strength by repose ; she therefore threw herself, dressed as she was, on the bed, and, her mind being rather easier than it had been for some hours, she fell profoundly asleep, and awoke recovered. Mr. Carwell was still with Lord Farnford, from which she augured good ; and, as soon as Lady Harriet was stirring, she communicated to her the hope she entertained.

CHAP. XIX.

REPREHENSION.

THE arrival of Lord Farnford's medical attendants obliged Mr. Carwell to retire, and he then came to Constance who was with her two friends, he asked to speak with her in private, which she readily granted, and learnt from him that his labour promised the wished-for success, he said he had never seen an instance where a fine understanding and good dispositions had been so clouded and perverted, nor had he ever known reason more easily resume her function, than now that all prospect of accustomed pleasures was cut off: he observed that Lord Farnford's continuance in a course of vice was in a great measure owing to the warmth of his temper, and to his never having been obliged to think; and he undertook for him that, should
he

he recover and happily retain the sentiments with which he was newly inspired, the remainder of his life would be exemplary ; a consideration which he reminded Constance must comfort her under her misfortunes, since they had contributed to the salvation of a fellow-being.

In this she acquiesced, and hoped she should be enabled to bear her lot without repining : she inquired of Mr. Carwell how Lord Farnford appeared to be, and heard her opinion that he was mending corroborated. When his physician came out of his room, and she met him, he told her his Lordship was considerably better, and that, as the alarming symptoms were nearly removed, he entertained very little doubt of restoration.

Now would probably be the test of the Earl's sincerity : when the fear of death was taken away, the stimulative to repentance was gone ; and well knowing how small a spark of hope his imagination could kindle into a blaze, Constance was seriously apprehensive that his yet impressible heart would again become callous, and that her endeavours would be frustrated.

To guard as much as possible against this danger, she told his physician the great need there was of circumspection, and how much more prudent it would be, though it appeared cruel, to keep Lord Farnford ignorant of his amendment than to risque extinguishing a light which might
never

never again dawn: the propriety of this was evident, and she obtained a promise that both her orders and her wishes should be complied with.

After his side was dressed he slept, and in that time Mrs. Stavenell called. Constance was very glad to have a reason for dissuading her from seeing him, as she had received too many proofs of her aunt's want of judgment to be satisfied, she would not defeat the united efforts of his friends by expressing her sense of his situation: she told Mrs. Stavenell that whatever alteration was observed, was rather favourable, but that much depended on his being kept quiet.

He did not once in the remainder of the day ask for Constance, but would hardly allow Mr. Carwell to leave him: about ten o'clock in the evening, she went, to bid him adieu for the night, and afterwards hear from Mr. Carwell what had been the subjects of conversation between them. Lord Farnford's natural temper was now their chief reliance; and it afforded her infinite satisfaction when her zealous assistant declared as his opinion, that a prospect of recovery would act as an encouragement on his disciple's mind: very happy in the opportunity of contributing to his ease, if it might safely be done, she trusted Mr. Carwell's sagacity, and undertook to let his Lordship know in the morning, herself, that their hopes increased.

They were only the general heads of what had passed that Constance was informed of; she was not inquisitive,

quisitive, and Mr. Carwell was discreet : he told her, that Lord Farnford had made a recital of the principal occurrences of his life, had permitted him to censure them, and expressed a strong desire to atone for his sins in the best manner he was able : he said he found the crime which, next to his conduct to Lady Farnford, lay most heavily on his conscience, respected a lady for whom he seemed to entertain a very great affection ; he had described her as, till his acquaintance with her, the image of spotless purity ; he had acknowledged many aggravations of his cruelty to her : and, above all, condemned himself because he had taken advantage of her love for him, and of her dependance on his family : to this lady he said his wife had been extremely kind, and it was not difficult to conclude, that it was Charlotte Lyscot : but what inference to draw from a wish he had mentioned to see her, Constance knew not ; and still more disconcerted was she, when Mr. Carwell added that if it were possible, it would be right to indulge him.—Do you think so ? said Constance : surely if he is sincere in his repentance, this can do no good : she is placed as a boarder in a convent ; and though, without regard to myself, I would do whatever would produce any real benefit to my Lord or to her, I must own, that, in my opinion, it would be highly improper to bring her again to England, and to risque the re-kindling an affection hardly extinct,
when

when I am an irremovable obstacle to its justifiable gratification.

Would you honour me so far, replied Mr. Carwell, as to trust me that I will do nothing that can be attended with bad consequences? I know my suggestion wears an odd appearance; but I will confess to you, that there is a circumstance, which I cannot prevail on Lord Farnford to acquaint you with, which would perfectly satisfy you of the expediency of sending immediately for this lady: from his Lordship's present state, I judge, that the restoration of his health will soon cease to be doubtful; and, if it were not presumption to ask so implicit a confidence, I would beg to know where Miss Lycot's friends are to be found, and your advice as to the most eligible mode of sending for her.

Certainly, rejoined Constance, you are either very ill informed as to the species of attachment between my Lord and Miss Lycot, or you are a stranger to my temper. Can you suppose his *wife* would be instrumental in his renewing a connection with her, who, if one were inclined to speak harshly, might be stigmatized by the appellation of his *mistress*? till I am convinced of the utility of the measure, indeed Mr. Carwell, you must excuse my obstinacy. Perhaps you are employed to try me: if you are, tell Lord Farnford I will, as long as I live, do my duty towards him, and I shall expect he performs his engagement to me: he has
vowed

vowed to forsake all other women, and, after what he has made me suffer, the least I can demand is his undivided affection.

I commend your spirit and your temper, answered Mr. Carwell, but I am not at liberty to explain myself any farther. I will try to-morrow if I can persuade Lord Farnford, and can now only beg that you will suspend any unfavourable judgment of what I have said, till you hear farther.— She promised to do so, they parted, and she could not go to bed without asking Lady Harriet's opinion of this strange proposition: neither of them could reconcile it to reason, nor after much deliberation, understand it.

Lord Ormington had engaged his daughter, and Mr. Gaynham, to spend the next day with him; they therefore left Constance immediately after breakfast, when she went to Lord Farnford, and found him better than he had yet been: he was aware that his danger was lessened; but seemed very happy to have it confirmed by his wife, to whom he shewed himself more rationally and more tenderly attached than ever. He repeated to her part of what passed with Mr. Carwell, thanked her for the seasonable relief she had procured him, promised that his future life should be an atonement for his former transgressions; and intimated an intention of providing for Mr. Carwell in such a way as should make him one of his household.

In

In order to learn from him what this *one* circumstance was, which he could not be persuaded to reveal, she endeavoured, by assuring him of her disposition towards promoting his happiness, to inspire him with confidence in her; but it had not the effect she desired: he was very grateful, very penitent, and very affectionate; but the grand secret was not developed, nor could she find out whether it was such as warranted her curiosity.

He was now pronounced, by all who attended him, out of danger, unless his fever returned, which it did not during the whole of that day: he sat up a little in the forenoon, saw Constance frequently, conversed with her on the subject of their formal marriage, which his illness had postponed; and rendered her situation rather uneasy, by obliging her, lest she should disturb him, to conceal that it was, notwithstanding all her endeavours, against her inclination that she became finally his wife.

She dined with Mr. Carwell, whose countenance did not please her; he looked more than commonly grave and thoughtful, and she began to fear he was less sanguine in his expectations respecting Lord Farnford than he had been: she questioned him on this head, but receiving no other answer than that, till all possible reparation was made, repentance was incomplete, she desisted; he went at six in the evening

evening, by his own request, to visit the earl, and had been with him more than two hours when she was sent for.

Though she conjectured she was called to hear something of which she was before ignorant, and, from the preceding circumstances, that it was of importance to her, no preparation was to be made to receive whatever it might be with fortitude, because she knew not whence the blow would come, nor whither it would reach ; she could suppose only, that as had generally been her misfortune, it was a revelation that would give her pain ; and, by reflecting that she had already lost all that was dear to her, tried to arm herself against new calamity.

Mr. Carwell drew a chair for her by the earl's bedside, and retired to a small distance behind her, remaining silent : she asked Lord Farnford how he found himself, but he made no other reply than fixing his eyes on her, and grasping her hand. Her fears now rose, and she earnestly inquired whether he was worse than when she saw him last : he then, after some commotion, answered—" No!—I am " better : I see the necessity of it, and will endure " the torture : it is a penance proportioned to my " sins ; but surely it is very hard to bear. My " dear Constance, you cannot conceive what I " suffer, for you cannot conceive how I love you ; " but we must part !"

It was impossible for Constance to ask what he meant ; she was struck dumb by his last words ; till
recol-

recollecting herself, and apprehensive that this was a return of his delirium, her astonishment subsided, and she desired him not to torment himself but to endeavour to rest, for she would not leave him: he shook his head, told her that she was mistaken, that he could say no more to her then, but would send for her another time, and tell her how very ill he had used her: his emotion was too perceptible to be safely increased by solicitation, or soothed by any thing she could urge, and she quitted him without having received the satisfaction she had expected, and more puzzled than ever.

Mr. Gaynham called, in his way home from Lord Ormington's, to leave his wife with Constance, and she inquired what they thought of these mysterious words. The construction Lady Harriet put on them was, that Lord Farnford's spirits being low he was fearful he should not recover; but Mr. Gaynham, from the account of his contrition, rather inclined to believe he would punish himself for his compulsion of her, by living in a state of separation from her.

This was a degree of heroic virtue, to which it was not easy to credit his lordship's having yet reached, however sincere his repentance might be: but, as it was not absolutely impossible, she would not wholly reject the idea, which it was apparent gave Lady Harriet great pleasure: nothing could reconcile her to the man who had so supplanted her beloved brother, and, as soon as Mr. Gaynham

was gone, her imagination was at work thinking how Constance should be disposed of, if Lord Farnford did, to the extent of his power, renounce her: she insisted on her living with her, and was projecting many schemes, when her friend stopped her by replying, that, Lord Farnford's resolving to do so, and offering it, was as much as could be required of him; that, should he propose it, she, as was her duty, would dissuade him from it; and unless she was convinced it was necessary to his peace of mind, she would not consent to it: she said, that as his wife it was incumbent on her to live with him, and that as one who sincerely wished and would promote his welfare, she must not deprive him of what might perhaps be an encouragement to his persevering in the course he had resolved on; and that, though were she to have her choice she must prefer a retirement from him; but as it was unjust that he should be punished for his *repentance*, she would by every means strive to convince him, that a life of virtue was the only life of happiness.

Lady Harriet was just disappointed in her newly formed hopes, when Mr. Carwell came in to supper: he was still very thoughtful, and rather confirmed Mr. Gaynham's supposition, by commending Lord Farnford's temper of mind, and telling Constance he had engaged that she should be with him as soon as he rose the next forenoon, when he had promised to explain what he had said in the evening.

Her

Her endeavours to sleep were all night ineffectual: the words *we must part* made an impression on her which nothing could efface, and occupied her thoughts much more than her reason warranted: she considered that they might be spoken in a fit of dejection, or in a momentary delirium, and the necessity appeared to her too improbable to entitle them to her attention; but nevertheless she could not forget them; every time she closed her eyes she started at the fancied reiteration of them, and chiding herself for folly did not prevent her again being as foolish as before.

About an hour before the time Lady Harriet usually set out to pay her diurnal visit to her family, Mr. Gaynham sent for her to meet him at Lord Ormington's, and soon afterwards Mrs. Stavenell and Lady Emma came; a message was sent to Lord Farnford, desiring to know if they might see him, to which his answer was, that he had slept well and was considerably better, but that he saw no company; a reply which astonished Constance as much as it displeased his sister, who with a degree of resentment which she was not at all studious to disguise, said significantly to Mrs. Stavenell, that she had guessed this would soon be the case, but that she would find a way to be revenged on those who had set her brother against her.

This roused Constance's indignation, as it was undoubtedly levelled at her; but as she would not give her malicious ladyship the advantage of throw-

ing herself off her guard, she mildly answered, that it was the height of injustice to suppose Lord Farnford prepossessed against her, and that from her heart she believed he only declined her visit because he found his spirits too weak for conversation ; but that, rather than Lady Emma should be uneasy and suspect her, she would go to him and learn his reason for what so offended her. Mrs. Stavenell said this was unnecessary, for that he had a right to refuse them ; but Lady Emma appearing much dissatisfied, Constance sent a servant up to ask if she might speak with Lord Farnford, and her request being immediately granted, she left the ladies and went, as she did not doubt, to hear that the company of those whom he was not frequently used to see was more than, so early in his convalescent state, he could bear.

He was up, and though there was a great degree of melancholy in his countenance, returning health was visible : he extended his hand to his wife, and kindly inquired her business with him, which when he had heard, and she had told him how it affected Lady Emma, he thus replied—" Tell Mrs. Stavenell I am much obliged to her attention, but that, as my eyes are opened, I cannot exclude the conviction that it is to her want of judgment I owe a great part of my present misery ; she is therefore more absurd than ever if she supposes I can wish to see her : and tell Lady Emma, that I advise her if she would escape horrid dreams and the torment

" I have

" I have endured, to think of the folly of her life,
" for in that dreadful place I am sure I saw her.
" Bid her reflect, and you may add that the greatest
" blessing I can wish her is a sick bed."

Such a flaming sword it was impossible for Constance to carry without lighting up a tremendous blaze, and she now heartily repented having undertaken the embassy : she told the earl she could not repeat what he had said. and begged to have a more pacific message, but he would not even qualify it. Not knowing what excuse to find that had a shadow of truth, she could only resolve not to be the herald of war, when Lord Farnford perceiving he distressed her, bid her stay with him, and sent a servant, who waited in an outward room, to Mrs. Stavenell and his sister, desiring them to come up.

She would fain have retired from this which must be a disagreeable rencontre, and she entreated him to permit it.—No, he replied, you must not ; you will oblige me much by staying, and no harm shall ensue to you. I have been lulled asleep myself, and am too well aware of the danger I have escaped, to suffer others to continue unwarned in the same path.

The ladies presently entered, and Lord Farnford apologized ceremoniously for the trouble he had given them, by saying he understood they wished to be informed why he had declined seeing them. —They said they did ; and addressing himself first

to Mrs. Stavenell, he, while he acknowledged the many obligations she had conferred on him, bitterly reproached her for her criminal indulgence of him while he was under her care: he accused her of having fostered every vice that sprang up in his bosom, of having encouraged and abetted projects that she ought to have counteracted, and concluded by saying, that he must be more completely blinded than he had ever yet been, if he did not see that she was equally the cause of his sufferings and of Miss Fitzarthur's.

Mrs. Stavenell now rose to depart; her countenance plainly indicating she was *amply* satisfied; and Lady Emma would have followed her, but her brother detained her; and after having severely condemned her unjust suspicion of Constance, he briefly told her he did not desire to see her till she was sorry for what she had done: her Ladyship was not so easily terrified as Mrs. Stavenell had been: she vehemently replied to him; but a hint which she seemed perfectly to understand, that he would expose part of her conduct, if she was refractory, or ever again intimated any thing disagreeable of Miss Fitzarthur, silenced her, and she bounced out of the room, muttering a protestation, that she would never enter the house again.

C H A P. XX.

CONFLICT.

NOTWITHSTANDING the justice of Lord Farnford's censure was not to be denied, Constance felt for Lady Emma, and begged him not to suffer her to depart in anger, but that she might fetch her back. Her influence was not great enough to prevail on him, and she could only hope that, though it was impossible to prevent a rupture, it might not be to effect a future reconciliation.

As she had no farther business after they were gone, she asked Lord Farnford if he wished her to stay any longer: he was alone with her, and, before he answered her, he desired her to ring the bell: his valet came in, and he bid him tell Mr. Carwell he wanted to speak with him. Constance repeated her question, when turning from her as if he would avoid looking at her, he replied,—Do not go:—I have something to say to you when Mr.

H 4

Carwell

Carwell comes. She therefore sat down, and imagining that she was now to hear the explanation she had been promised, she summoned all her courage lest it should prove as she feared, something very terrific.

Mr. Carwell came : and, after a pause of a few seconds which nobody seemed inclined to interrupt, Lord Farnford took Constance's hand and pressing it to his lips, said,—The friend you have found for me has been the means of undeceiving me, and has convinced me that I have yet much to do before my repentance can be sincere. I have given up myself to his guidance, and he has enjoined the severest of all penances : he insists on my relinquishing you, and I have promised to submit ; for to what would I not submit rather than undergo the horror of such a dream again ? I told you, my love, we must part ; we *will* part : you cannot love such a wretch as I have been ; I will not be cruel to you : you are at liberty to leave this house whenever you chuse it.

His voice faltered, he trembled and turned pale, while Constance's sympathetic mind shone in her eyes, and distressed beyond measure at seeing one in so weak a state so agitated ; she replied,—My Lord, your repentance has effaced from my memory that I am by force your wife : it has pleased God to take from me all I valued in this world, to make my acquiescence in his will less difficult, and I
sub-

submit without murmuring: if you can derive happiness from your connection with me, and continue but what you appear now, I have no just reason to a wish separation; on the contrary I will do my utmost to confirm you in the principles I have adopted, and no reproach for what is passed shall ever escape me.

You must be silent, he rejoined, or I shall fail in the implicit obedience I have promised, I cannot look at you and hear you, and at the same time maintain a resolution I have pledged myself to fulfil that this shall be the last day of your residing in my house: what I have to tell you will reconcile you to this in a moment, and all I ask is that it may convince you that he who so injured you thinks no atonement too great: I would give ten thousand worlds it had been sooner made: it has now lost its value, and you will hate me for having so long withheld it,

You keep me in tormenting suspense, said Constance,—I cannot suppose you mean to desert me, but yet your turning me from you, indicates a wish to be rid of me: can you be so cruel after having torn me from———

I will not keep you in suspense, he answered,—but I can hardly command my senses sufficiently to tell you: you are not my wife; you never were; nor shall you ever be, till I am the abandoned wretch you once knew me.

Had this information been intelligible, it would have overfet Constance : happily it required elucidation, and gave her time to recollect herself : she rose, and, with her eyes swimming in tears, she besought him that he would not be so barbarous as to expose her to unmerited contumely, by refusing her the conjugal protection she claimed.— If, said she, your love for me is extinct, if you look on me only as the author of evil to you, and cannot endure me in your sight, send me from you ; but still, if you have any feeling, save me from public censure ; acknowledge that it is your wife you so harass, and let my attendance on you stand excused by my relation to you.

He turned his head away in silence ; and, covering his eyes with his hand, remained unmoved by her entreaties, till she, growing more urgent, and endeavouring to make him look at her, by removing his hand, he said,—Go ; Constance go ; I cannot bear you here : Mr. Carwell, take her away, or I must give up : it is a conflict greater than human nature can support.

In obedience to this command, Mr. Carwell laid hold on her arm, and would have drawn her from Lord Farnford : she resisted, and dropping on her knees before him, whom she yet, notwithstanding his rejection of her, stiled her husband, she, with the utmost energy, begged she might not be forced from him ; he waved his hand, as if desiring her to go ; and overcome by his passions, which he was not yet strong enough to combat, he fell from his chair in a swoon.

His

His attendants were instantly called, and Mr. Carwell, committing him to their care, took Constance out of the room. It was now difficult to persuade her that there was not a conspiracy against her, or that she had a friend in the world: she could not refrain from blaming even the zeal she had excited and employed; and, in the agony of her mind, accused Mr. Carwell of having punished her for her misfortunes. He bore all her innocent anger patiently, and without reply, till she called on him to explain and account for this wonderful, this unreasonable change in Lord Farnford: he then told her cautiously, that his Lordship had doubts respecting the validity of his marriage, and that it must be a re-performance of the ceremony that constituted her his wife.

And why, interrupted Constance, hastily, will he not have the ceremony immediately re-performed? For Heaven's sake, Mr. Carwell, consider me in the advice you give him: is my misery, my reproach, my infamy necessary to his peace or reformation? Must I be a cast-away in this world, that he may obtain pardon in the next? What construction do you think will be affixed to my living here? I have been married four months, and have been acknowledged as his wife; how is it possible that I should gain credit to that which may be the subterfuge of caprice, even if I were to add my testimony, that our marriage was not valid.

H

Do

Do go to him, tell him I will do any thing not criminal, rather than face the censure or suspicion of the world : bid him reflect on the cruelty of exposing me to the doubts that will rise in the minds of those who have called me by his name. Can I resume my father's name, without exciting an idea, that I took the other because I found it convenient, and quitted it when I was weary of it ? Let me entreat you to see him instantly, and to impress on his mind the wickedness of such conduct.

Mr. Carwell appeared embarrassed; and, as if not knowing how to answer to her, yielded to her request, that he would go to Lord Farnford. Almost as soon as he had left her, Mr. Gaynham came, alone; and she went down to him, without staying to recover from her distress.

Immersed as she was in the contemplation of her own woes, his appearance caught her attention and convinced her that new sufferings were preparing for her: she eagerly asked after Lady Harriet, and he answered, I don't know what to do with her: she is scarcely in her senses: such a transition has overset her: Lord Ormington is dead: I have taken her home, in hopes her passions will relieve themselves by their violence, and she desired me to come to you directly.

The death of such a father was a grief only as it respected his daughter: Mr. Gaynham's sorrow did

did not diminish his interest for Constance; he heard her incoherent account of what had passed with Lord Farnford with wonder, but declined judging whether his Lordship deserved blame or commendation till he had learned farther particulars.

All the consolation he offered her was an assurance that, whatever befel her, his house should always be open to receive her, and that, were all the world her enemies, he, who so well knew her worth would stand forth her friend and her advocate: he intimated that it was impossible Mr. Carwell should desert her interest, told her, her affairs would in a little time wear a brighter aspect, and repeatedly said that, if Lord Farnford was serious, his repentance at this juncture was providential. He warmly pressed her consenting to his seeing the Earl and talking to him on the subject: for this purpose, a servant was sent to ask an audience, which was immediately, and in terms of alacrity, granted.

Her situation was become distractingly singular, for she knew not her name nor her condition, and, as had frequently been her misfortune, the least controvertible point was, that every change she experienced was for the worse. The release which Lord Farnford had in contemplation, and which while Lord Calorne was living would have been her greatest good, was now highly detrimental to her and impeached her character; beside it did not
ap-

appear to her possible, even if no censure followed it, that it could be effectual, to prove that she was *not* married, when there were witnesses of her marriage, would be too bold an enterprize for corruption itself; and she saw that she must remain just so far Lord Farnford's wife as to be completely unhappy, and yet have no right to claim his regard or protection.

C H A P. XXI.

M I S C O N S T R U C T I O N .

MR. Carwell and Mr. Gaynham returned together from Lord Farnford; and Constance was rendered desperate by hearing that the latter of her two friends had been prevailed on to approve this cruel repudiation of her; he stated to her, the
mo-

motives which gave rise to this resolution, and seemed satisfied that they were those of conscience; but of this it was hard to convince her, who suffered by it; and she could not but suspect that the Earl was adding hypocrisy to his former vices, by pretending a sanctimonious scrupulosity, when it was caprice that impelled him. Some new object, unattainable without that which he had it not in his power to bestow, unless he got rid of Constance, she imagined had awakened his ardour, and she considered herself as sold for his convenience. That two gentlemen, who had hitherto so warmly, so generously espoused her cause, should betray her, by supporting such a scheme, she could not coolly suppose, because they were avowedly the enemies of vice; and this conduct was in the highest degree vicious, yet she could not pay their heads the compliment she thought due to their hearts, nor persuade herself that they were not, at least, imposed on.

All representations from her, all warning that Lord Farnford was deceiving them, availed nothing: they were both confirmed in the opinion of his sincerity; both assured her that he acted against his inclination, that he punished himself far beyond what she suffered, and both commended his firmness, and hoped his perseverance. She now begged to see him again; but, as if they had no rule of conduct but opposition to her, this was

refused her, and Mr. Gayaham told her she must go to Burlington-street with him, as she could not properly remain where she was: he said Lord Farnford had consented to his taking her away, and had promised, to write to her in the evening and explain the whole matter.

Whither she went or what became of her was totally unimportant to Constance: she was the sport of fortune; she was just what it suited others that she should be, and her happiness was the price at which their's was purchased: to help herself was impossible; her best friends had abandoned her; but reflection calling up her resentment, she determined for the present to submit, then to appeal to Lord Reycolm, the only one whose assistance she could expect, and to procure his aid in substantiating her marriage, which at all hazards she resolved to attempt.

So impatient was Mr. Gaynham for her leaving Portman-square, that he would not wait while he could send for his carriage, but ordered a hackney coach: before it could be brought, he, on consulting in a whisper with Mr. Carwell seemed to have changed his mind: and said he must speak to Lady Harriet, would therefore go home immediately, and come back for Lady Farnford. During his absence, Mr. Carwell remained with her, she said not a word to him; and, as soon as Mr. Gaynham returned, they both, without manifesting the concern

which surely her misfortunes demanded, hurried her to be gone.—Mr. Carwell was to stay with Lord Farnford, and very coolly exhorting her to patience and to fortitude, he took leave of her.

Concurring for the first time in the misanthropic opinions of disgust and disappointment, satisfied that she had mistaken Mr. Carwell's character, and doubtful whether she understood Mr. Gaynham's; with no hope but that her calamities were greater than mortality could support, and too wretched even to wish for peace, she obeyed the cruel injunction, and quitted Lord Farnford's house.

In their way, Mr. Gaynham said little to her, except advising her to bear up with patience: she paid no heed to him, and, when they stopped at his door, she jumped out before him, and having inquired for Lady Harriet, ran to tell her how barbarously she had been treated.

She bounced into the room without giving any notice that she was come, and, too much occupied to perceive that Lady Harriet was walking up and down in the utmost perturbation, she fell on her neck, and bursting into tears, exclaimed—There never were such cruel creatures! they have turned me out of the house! O! I shall go mad:—she then retired a few paces to a chair, and was in a moment unconscious of her misery.

When she recovered, she found Mr. Gaynham and Lady Harriet by her, they both endeavoured
to

to comfort her ; but their consolations were ineffectual, for they declared their approbation of Lord Farnford's conduct : her Ladyship, agitated as she was, seemed to have lost great part of her tenderness for her friend, and Mr. Gaynham all his feeling. Constance, unable to hear assurance of affection which she began to doubt, exhortations to patience for which she had no encouragement, and expressions of joy at a return which was the misfortune she complained of, would have gone up stairs ; but even in this she was thwarted.

Mr. Gaynham now talked aside to Lady Harriet, while Constance sat a prisoner and a monument of woe : her animation had scarcely any other token than the convulsive heaving of her bosom : the natural struggle for life counteracted her wishes ; and she panted for the breath she earnestly prayed would stop. After about ten minutes' conversation, he left the room, and her Ladyship having rung the bell, inquired if Lady Farnford's maid was come, she was told she was, and ordering her to be sent up, she quitted Constance, who, midst all her afflictions, was not dead to the sense of their neglect of her. Kitty was now her only companion, and she afforded her a consolation, hitherto denied her, that of agreeing with her that she was most inhumanly treated : what had passed at Lord Farnford's, was unintelligible to her till her mistress, by a few particulars, explained it,
and

and convinced her that it was caprice, not conscience, that punished her. Constance declared to her, her resolution of still maintaining that she was Lord Farnford's wife, and was comforted by hearing that though it was not known who was the clergyman that married her, the person who gave her away might be found out.

Her only view in attempting to prove her marriage, was to escape calumny, which none, excepting him from whom she had the greatest reason to fear it, and herself knew to be unmerited: she had no wish to return to Lord Farnford, nor could she think of accepting from him, if she succeeded, any of that protection and regard which she might claim: she desired never to see him again; and, after he had publicly owned her, it was her intention to renounce all intercourse with him, and to suffer him to live as if she had never existed.

Mr. Gaynham and Lady Harriet were absent near an hour, and then he came in, alone; he dismissed Kitty, and now endeavoured to soothe Constance, whose passions were of themselves nearly exhausted: but by what means did he try to calm her? By vindicating and commending Lord Farnford, by putting her in mind that it was no great hardship to be separated from a man she did not like, and by prophesying that a few hours would perhaps make her change her opinion.

Conversation on this subject, producing the effect that must have been foreseen, by rousing her indignation,

nation, Mr. Gaynham diverted it, and talked with much sang froid of Lord Ormington, and of his sorrow for his opposition to his son: this made Constance cry heartily, which he encouraged, and then, by way of casual observation, remarked, on the inflexible obstinacy of some minds, instanced Lady Harriet, who was not to be persuaded that Lord Calorne was dead, notwithstanding it was evident that the letter he had written to her, was the last intellectual act he was capable of.—And what reason, said Constance, can she have for her incredulity?—That no official account has yet arrived of his death, Mr. Gaynham answered.—There are no dispatches arrived yet, I suppose, said she.—Yes, replied Mr. Gaynham, a vessel is come: but, by some blunder, his name is omitted in the return.—It is an omission, she rejoined; tell her I will undertake to assure her he is dead.

Mr. Gaynham again went away, and Lady Harriet came, she asked Constance how she did, and added.—Do you know I am a little cheered by thinking there is a probability that my brother may have recovered? it is not impossible, and I declare I shall hope till I am forbidden: if I am disappointed, I am but where I have been, tell me your opinion: do you not think there is room for hope?—No, answered Constance, and I would not have you flatter yourself. Can you imagine he would have written as he did, if there had been the least

least chance of his life ; beside the oppression of his mind was of itself sufficient to have killed him : do not court hope, she has so often deceived me that I never will trust her again : your brother is dead and happy : I cannot wish him alive, I only pray to go to him. I beg, Lady Harriet, you will not talk to me of him : you may perhaps intend it kindly to make me more willingly submit to Lord Farnford's cruel resolution, but it is a subject so painful to me and so unfit for my present contemplation, that, unless you will indulge me by being silent on it, I must leave you.—*I will leave you*, replied Lady Harriet.—she then went away, and Constance, notwithstanding her own sorrows, could not but remark with pity the delusion with which this amiable woman was pleasing herself.

CHAP.

C H A P. XXII,

R E F E R E N C E .

SHE had remained a very short time alone when a letter was brought to her, the superscription of which being written in Mr. Carwell's hand, she knew to come from Portman-square: in expectation of having now a basis whereon to found her final resolve, she opened it, and read these words:

‘ Madam,

‘ Lord Farnford, desiring to spare you every
‘ moment of needless suspense, has honoured me by
‘ employing me to write his sentiments: he is too
‘ weak to undertake the task himself this day, and, as
‘ deferring it would add to your hours of uneasiness,
‘ he hopes you will be satisfied with my assuring you
‘ I will faithfully commit to paper whatever he
dictates.

‘ I am, Madam, with great truth,

‘ Your obliged and very humble servant.

B. C A R W E L L .’

‘ My

‘ My very dear Madam,

‘ The grand struggle is over : my
‘ sufferings are diminishing, but they are yet too
‘ great to permit my addressing you myself. I
‘ wish you to have all the satisfaction I can give
‘ you ; and it is an incumbent duty on me to give
‘ it you as early as possible.

‘ Your truly charitable endeavours to convince
‘ me of the heinousness of my offences, aided by
‘ Mr. Carwell’s labours it has pleased the Power
‘ against whom I have most atrociously sinned, to
‘ render effectual, and, with his blessing, it shall
‘ be the business of my life to acknowledge the
‘ mercy that has been so unmeritedly bestowed on
‘ me.

‘ It is wholly out of my ability to compensate
‘ for half the mischief I have done ; the cry must,
‘ after my utmost efforts, remain very loud against
‘ me ; but I solemnly intend, as far as my fortune
‘ and interest will serve, to expiate my sins, by the
‘ most strenuous exertions for those I have injured :
‘ many may truly say my sins are utterly inexpi-
‘ able : to them I will publicly confess the wrong
‘ I have done them ; and can only hope that a
‘ sincere repentance, as all I can offer, will be
‘ accepted.

‘ Amongst those who have reason to curse the
‘ hour I was born, yourself and Charlotte Lycot
‘ stand foremost ; and I must be cruel to one, that
‘ I may make amends to the other. I will lay open
‘ my

‘ my heart to you, and will be, as I wish I had
‘ ever been, guided by your judgment, which I am
‘ satisfied, even in a case so nearly concerning you,
‘ will be impartial.

‘ In my scandalous pursuit of Charlotte I found
‘ it absolutely necessary to promise I would marry
‘ her ; and, my love for her being very great, I
‘ determined to fulfill my engagement : my meet-
‘ ing with you entirely diverted my thoughts from
‘ this intention, and I had then no other than that
‘ of obtaining you : my attachment to you was
‘ such as I never before felt : it was a passion, bad
‘ and unprincipled as I was, founded on esteem ;
‘ I revered you ; you inspired me with awe, while
‘ you every moment increased my love. Charlotte
‘ Lyfscot was then forgotten, and I treated her in-
‘ humanly, though my affection for her was not
‘ extinct, well knowing that her tenderness for me
‘ would overcome all her resentment.

‘ When I had, by the basest and most infamous
‘ artifice, enticed you to this house, and forced you
‘ to consent to marry me, you may remember I
‘ proposed that that vilest of his species, Metward
‘ should complete your misery : after you had so
‘ firmly resisted me, and I had, by an insult not
‘ to be forgiven, threatened you into compliance, I
‘ was fearful that you would again grow resolute,
‘ and therefore precipitated the reading of the service.
‘ Metward was gone out, not imagining I should so
‘ soon want him ; the apprehensions attendant on
‘ guilt

‘ guilt, terrified me : I was persuaded I should lose
‘ you if I delayed, and therefore I employed my
‘ steward, who will, on requisition, attest it on
‘ oath, to brave the vengeance of Heaven, by a
‘ mock performance of the ceremony. I knew it
‘ would be easy to induce you, for the preservation
‘ of your character, to agree to a second marriage ;
‘ and as, whatever I have to answer for, I can
‘ safely assert, that I never harboured a thought of
‘ you, which did not imply this permanent union,
‘ it was only with a design to secure you immedi-
‘ ately that I imposed on you.

‘ These circumstances, Madam, I have com-
‘ municated to Mr. Carwell, and have tried to
‘ persuade him to that for which I feel the strongest
‘ inclination, a re-performance of the rite which
‘ shall irrevocably make you my wife ; but he op-
‘ poses me, and tells me I must testify my repentance
‘ by renouncing you : he says I add to my cruelty
‘ to you, by retaining you, since I am well convinced
‘ you do not love me. Of this, I own, I am too
‘ well convinced, because it is utterly impossible
‘ you can love me : yet, from your behaviour
‘ during my illness, from the sentiments you have
‘ expressed, and from your natural temper, I did
‘ hope that you would live with me without being
‘ very unhappy.

‘ To retain the spoil after I have given up the
‘ victory, I confess, unjustifiable ; yet how to re-
‘ store it, none except yourself can teach me.—

‘ Even in this act of self-denial, I injure you !
‘ for, though you may rejoice in a separation from
‘ me, as our marriage was publickly known, it
‘ may be difficult to contradict it : but if I must
‘ lose you, I will leave nothing undone that can
‘ vindicate you, and prove that I only am to
‘ blame.

‘ I can obtain no greater relaxation from Mr.
‘ Carwell, than permission to refer the matter to
‘ you ; and, if I may judge from the disposition
‘ you manifested just now, I hope you will deter-
‘ mine for me. You are now convinced that you
‘ are yet *Miss Fitzarthur* ; if you think it a less
‘ evil to marry me, than to trust to my undeceiving
‘ the world, Mr. Carwell in that case has agreed
‘ to join our hands ; and I beg you will come to
‘ me immediately. On the contrary, if you pre-
‘ fer continuing as you are, he insists on my send-
‘ ing for Charlotte Lycot, and marrying her.

‘ If your just hatred of me, which perhaps may
‘ only have been suspended by your pity, dictates a
‘ rejection, I submit. What recompense then shall
‘ I offer you ? I can make you none that you can
‘ deem such ; but I may, in a small degree, lighten
‘ the oppressive burthen of my conscience, by en-
‘ gaging, as a sacrifice for my sins, to devote all
‘ that part of my fortune which I had settled on
‘ you, either to your use or any other that you shall
‘ name. instruct me to do good, and I will endea-
‘ vour it.

‘ Mr .

‘ Mr. Carwell prohibits my requiring an answer
‘ from you till to-morrow, and enjoins you not to
‘ send it till then, lest, he says, your passions should
‘ cloud your judgment. I have yielded to this,
‘ and I beg that, should you chuse to consider my
‘ engagement to you as binding, your return may
‘ be the reply; if you quit your indisputable claim,
‘ your sending back your ring will be a sufficiently
‘ mortifying token.

‘ Impressed with the deepest sense of your unde-
‘ served attention and kindness to me, glowing with
‘ an affection for you, which, unlike what I have yet
‘ felt, shall lead me to consult your ease and hap-
‘ piness in preference to my own, and sincerely re-
‘ solved to aim at the possession of your esteem, I
‘ acknowledge you the source of every future good
‘ I may enjoy, and, however my love has been
‘ disappointed, I experience a degree of satisfaction
‘ from considering that as our marriage is null,
‘ there is no impediment to my relinquishing you,
‘ if you command it. I have no wish but to restore
‘ your peace, and should a happier man than my-
‘ self be blessed with your regard, I should exult
‘ in the reflection that this illegal union has never
‘ afforded me a moment’s gratification.

‘ I am, Madam,

‘ Your most devoted and respectful,

FARNFORD.

‘ P. S. I have seen Metward, and have told him
‘ if he does not quit the kingdom in a month he
‘ may expect to have the whole of his conduct ex-
‘ posed: the rascal pretends sorrow, and says he
‘ will go to America.’

C H A P. XXII.

H O P E.

TH E signature of this letter was of Lord Farn-
ford's writing, and the truth of it's contents it
would have been folly to doubt : the mystery was ex-
plained, his right to renounce Constance and to
marry Miss Lycot was unquestionable ; but a reso-
lution was not to be taken on such a subject without
deliberation. She was shocked at the imposition
under

under which she had so long lived, and could almost have wished herself, with all necessary formality, Lord Farnford's wife, rather than face the opprobrium she dreaded. This, it was true, she might evade by consenting to marry him again, as he certainly would not reveal what would so prejudice her in the opinion of the world, as divulging that her actions had not the necessary and supposed sanction : for how injurious was this to her, who had his prior promise !

What was best to be done was difficult to judge ; whom to advise with she knew not, since all those to whom she could immediately appeal were biased to Mr. Carwell's opinion ; driven therefore to reliance on her own, and with no other light than that which she might boldly have trusted, her conscience, she weighed the several arguments on each side, and at last determined that, as Charlotte Lycot was disposed of in a way that had extinguished all her expectations, and embraced a life the fittest for her circumstances, as she had once renounced her lover, and perhaps by this time did not wish ever to see him again, there was nothing criminal in Lord Farnford's following his inclination. She was pleased to find, that the motive to his conduct was what he could justify ; and the natural candour of her temper representing his purposed amendment as deserving of reward and encouragement, she nobly overcame all prejudices against

him, endeavoured to divest herself of all prepossession, and finally resolved that the remainder of her life should be devoted to him.

As she felt herself stimulated by no passion, and thought the reasonableness of her judgment could not be disputed, she was unwilling to keep him in suspense till the morrow, when she could at that moment satisfy him : impelled by an innate wish to diffuse happiness, and anxious to demonstrate that revenge had no place in her heart, she concluded on returning without delay to Portman-square, and, by marrying Lord Farnford, to draw a veil over her past misfortunes.

Though she suspected that both Mr. Gaynham's friendship, and that of his wife had suffered some diminution, it was not such as would warrant her leaving their house clandestinely ; but yet seeing them was an obstacle she hardly dared encounter ; she knew they would oppose her situation, and she knew that such painful recollections were always the consequence of a visit from Lord Calorne's sister, as would, more than any thing, shake her resolution : to bear this, called for that which was now become desperation ; it required fortitude, when submission was all she could boast ; and it required a victory over herself, at the moment she was conquered.

Her natural abhorrence of appearing ungrateful, nevertheless prevailed ; and, from the long time she

she had been left alone, doubting whether the family were not gone out, she called a servant, and having heard that they were not, requested to see Mr. Gaynham, as thinking him the less terrible of the two.

He instantly came, with as much composure as possible, and in a manner calculated to convince him that the point was past discussion, she told him of the reference Lord Farnford had made to her, and that her intention was to reward his penitence, by immediately and voluntarily surrendering herself to him. She reminded him that, whatever might be the opinion of those on whom other very laudable considerations acted, she must adhere to her own, if she thought it the least erroneous, and that as it was, and would be, her constant aim, to discharge the duty she owed to herself and to society, imputations which impeached her heart, would be cruel: she begged that she might be permitted to return to her husband, and that a step which it had required no small pains to resolve on, might not deprive her of Lady Harriet's affection.

Mr. Gaynham's countenance changed while she was speaking; and when she ceased, after a pause, he said to her,—I never was so distressed as at this moment: you do not ask my advice, and yet I must give it you, unprepared as I am. Mr. Carwell promised me that no answer to Lord Farnford should be required till to-morrow morning: why

then do you so hastily resolve?—Because, she replied, time cannot alter my opinion, and I wish to release my Lord from suspense.—You are very good, said Mr. Gaynham : but, however firm you may be, your determination must not be executed yet : if you chuse to go to Lord Farnford, to-morrow morning you shall, and I will attend you ; this day you must spend with us : besides, unless you have conquered your regard for my brother, you would do well to be cautious.—Conquered my regard for him ? repeated Constance : do you think that possible ? if this is the construction put on my conduct, let Lord Farnford marry Charlotte, and let my life be spent, as most willingly it shall be, in sorrow, and in calling to mind all that can render it agonizing : I would not, even to reward Lord Farnford's repentance, do any thing that your brother's spirit could not look down on with approbation ; and can you excite in me the least spark of reasonable hope, that there is a chance of his having recovered, or say that I ought to continue at liberty, I will instantly send back my ring to Lord Farnford ; I will wait the confirmation or death of my hopes with patience ; and, whatever is the event, I will rejoice in having risked nothing.

This I would advise you to do, answered Mr. Gaynham, though not to-day. What do you think of this strange notion, this judgment contrary to
evi-

evidence? It can do no good, said Constance, for I foresee it will be disappointed and can only be productive of increased grief: Lady Harriet should not be suffered to indulge, in such an error the blow will be very severe.—No, Mr. Gaynham rejoined, her hopes if they were ill-founded, will by degrees grow less, and will die away at last: I do not think it will do her any harm.

A smile on the countenance of her adviser awakened Constance's attention: an idea darted into her mind that he had more to reveal than she had yet heard.—Mr. Gaynham, said she eagerly, what have you to tell me? what reason have you to hope? what may I hope?—I have told you, he answered very coolly, what foundation we build on: Lord Calorne's name has not yet arrived, though the governor has sent dispatches: an officer of his rank, I should imagine, though I am an incompetent judge, would not have been omitted in the return, and many of inferior denomination are particularized: but ponder what I have said, and I will send Harriet to you, you shall hear her opinion, for perhaps I am too sanguine.

A persuasion which strengthened in her mind that, on such slight evidence, Mr. Gaynham would not have mentioned his hopes where he knew their disappointment would be most severely felt, and a suspicion that he withheld something from her now animated her, and, in an universal tremor, she intreated him to tell her whether he had not some con-

cealed support for this improbable conjecture : he made no answer ; she had caught the infection she dissuaded him from spreading, and assuring him there could be no news too good for her to bear, nor no shock of surprize that she could not stand, she drew from him a confession that his brother's wish to be released had magnified his idea of his danger, and that, at the time when the last vessel failed, he was alive.

So cautious had Mr. Gaynham been that no bad effect followed this communication : her eyes glistened, her lips quivered, she raised her hands to Heaven, and the humid effusions of her heart relieved her from all perturbation : she was immediately sensible of the necessity of circumspection in what she did ; he so fortified her that she could cherish this glimmering hope without emotion, and then left her to digest what she had heard.

She abandoned instantly all thoughts of returning to Lord Farnford, and, arming herself against whatever might happen either to nourish or eradicate the tender plant Mr. Gaynham had set, she resolved to join Mr. Carwell in that advice she had stigmatized as cruel to her, and to urge the recall of Charlotte Lycot. Her friends now appeared to her more than ever her *true* friends, and she felt very grateful for their thwarting a design which must have excluded every possible comfort.

C H A P. XXIII.

D E N O U E M E N T.

THE news she had heard was so pleasing to her that she wished for a repetition of it and for farther intelligence : she called to mind an hundred questions she might have asked ; she fancied, from Lady Harriet's supporting the shock of Lord Ormington's death so well, that it must have been counterbalanced by something more than she had yet learned, and she very readily obeyed the summons to dinner in hopes her curiosity would prevail on her friends to communicate all they knew : the opinion that they suppressed a part was confirmed by their countenances : for though Lady Harriet's wore the traces of the sorrow which a few hours before had overwhelmed her, it expressed greater cheerfulness than could be accounted for otherwise than by supposing as Constance did.

As soon as she was rid of the restraint of the servants, —said she to Mr. Gaynham, do not treat me like a child :

child : but tell me all you have heard of my Lord, for I am certain you have suppressed a part : you are afraid I should be too much overjoyed, and I thank you for your care ; but really I am so prepared that if—if—if—you were to open the door and shew me Lord Calorne,—I could,—I am sure,—I think,—I believe,—I hope I could bear it.

Mr. Gaynham smiled, and rallied her for her boasted yet dubitable courage, when his wife unable to contain herself any longer, burst into tears, and cried,—Do tell her, Mr. Gaynham : pray do tell her.

This request, which implied much, was followed by their united injunctions to Constance to summon all her presence of mind: she felt herself immoveably firm, and it being the opinion of all that no probable harm could ensue, and that she might be safely trusted, the office of prolocutor was assigned to Mr. Gaynham, and he, with many pauses, many exhortations to appeal to her smelling-bottle, and the utmost caution, told her that, when the dispatches were sent off, Lord Calorne was out of danger.—This is not all, replied Constance, when he abruptly paused : you see I am undisturbed, why will you doubt me ? you torment me. I can bear any shock, but not this suspense : Lord Calorne cannot be out of danger at Gibraltar : tell me is he in England ?

No,

No, Mr Gaynham rejoined,—but now that you have prudently anticipated the most dangerous stroke you shall know all : I have a letter from him and one for you, he is coming home, and will be with us in a few weeks ; and these really are all the important circumstances that I am in possession of : the letters shall be shewn you whenever you think you can read them without being too much affected, for you see how absolutely needful it is that you should employ every moment in preparing to meet him, and that you should avoid whatever will make too great an impression on you. .

Constance's eyes swam in tears, and with tolerable confidence she begged to see the letters Mr. Gaynham had mentioned ; he gave her that to himself first, and these were it's contents.

‘ Dear brother,

‘ In addition to my numerous causes of vexation, I have to reflect on my extreme folly in having written to Harriet at a time when I thought every pulsation of my heart was the last, and in such a manner, as must have convinced her I was, before that letter reached her, dead.

‘ I dare not address this to her, lest the surprize should overcome her ; I know your caution and prudence, and shall therefore omit all injunction : she will perhaps be rejoiced, though without reason ; for an extension of life is to me only a prolonga-

longation of misery : however, my mind is considerably stronger than it was, and I can now smile at misfortune.

‘ My wound was at no time dangerous ; but I believe I so teased those who attended me, that they were forced to tell me I should die, to pacify me : the air of this place is the best friend I have yet met with ; for, without any other disease, it would soon kill me : but of this I must not avail myself : the governor insists on my returning to England ; and, too kindly interested for the preservation of a valueless existence, hastens the departure of a vessel, that I may leave this place as soon as I can be moved : however irksome the thought of returning to a country which I ought to avoid, I cannot disobey him, and the pleasure of meeting you and my sister will, in some measure, for I cannot compliment, reconcile me to the necessity. I am to be the bearer of dispatches which, if a projected ally succeeds, as we have reason to hope, will be very acceptable to the court of London.

‘ The General, willing, I see, to do whatever can raise my depressed spirits, has pledged himself to procure for me, that which, while happiness was my aim, I so much wished for ; promotion, and a permanent situation in the army : his kindness it would be detestable ingratitude to repel, yet to you I may confess, that I prefer the situation of the
men

men who serve the guns, and whose dying groans frequently reach my ears.

‘ I am of no use here, nor indeed can I be useful any where while this dejection hangs about me. I tried for permission to expose myself in the intended sally, but could get no other answer than that I was too weak and too mad ; in the latter I am sure the Governor is mistaken, for I am very soberly melancholy.

‘ The civilities and acts of friendship I have met with here, are infinitely beyond what a person of greater desert and distinction could expect, in a place where self-preservation is too great a charge ; but to none, not even my most intimate friends, have I ever revealed the cause that oppresses me : some few with whom I was acquainted in England, suspect me ; but they find I cannot bear raillery : the hope, therefore, of meeting in you a friend who shall hear me, and can feel for me, is a stimulative to my return.

‘ I imagine I shall be with you in about three weeks after you receive this ; and I should be glad if you and Harriet could make it convenient to meet me at Portsmouth : a week will, I hope, be as long as shall detain you in waiting ; and I know you well enough, to be satisfied, that you will not grudge the attendance, when it produces me a gratification : if you are there on the 26th, I cannot doubt finding you on my landing.

‘ Did

‘ Did my father know what I have undergone, did he know that I strive continually to palliate and excuse to myself the injuries I have sustained from him, and that no deviation from his duty shall ever make me forget mine, I think he would receive me kindly : perhaps he may be wrought on : I will leave nothing undone ; but when I reflect on his inexorable severity to you and my sister, I almost despair : you only evaded his authority, I avowedly opposed it.

‘ I must beg you to take care that nothing may delay my setting off for London as soon as possible after my arrival at Portsmouth, as the execution of my commission will require dispatch.

‘ I have written as long as I can, though I am still unwilling to leave you.

‘ Give my love to Harriet, and her babes ; and believe me very truly and warmly

‘ your affectionate friend,

‘ C A L O R N E .’

C H A P.

C H A P. XXIV

R E S I G N A T I O N.

THAT these characters were traced by a hand supposed lifeless, and expressed the sentiments of Lord Calorne's yet glowing heart, was the consideration which touched Constance : all the intelligence communicated, was in itself pleasing, and rendered still more so, by having it in her power, not only to reconcile him to his fate, but to reward his sufferings : her fortune was, in prospect, such as removed every difficulty ; and the now Earl of Ormington's fate arrival, the only remaining subject of her anxiety ; her wish to be in possession of the letter he had written to her was, without hesitation, complied with, and she was victorious over the agitation occasioned by reading these words :

‘ If you, my dear——what?——not Miss Fitzarthur, for then I should not be separated from you :—not Lady Farnford, for I will not acknowledge you to be so.—I was going to say, if you
have

have heard of the letter which I imprudently sent to Harriet, you will perhaps be disappointed by receiving this : I am sure you wish my happiness : I am sure your sentiments are the same as when I left you ; therefore it can give you no pleasure to hear I am still under the weight of affliction.

‘ But may I be sure that your sentiments of me are unchanged ?—I fear not : my want of fortitude to bear this calamity, robs me of a portion of your esteem ; you will look with contempt on me, who pusillanimously sinks beneath misfortune : I will endeavour to resist it, though I know not how : I could have born any other stroke ; but to lose you, and at that moment, was more than I, than any one could bear..

‘ And I see you pale, melancholy, and withered : I see you shun ————— I will not write his name : I see him approach you : you receive him with sighs, with tears, with reproaches : but you must receive him : I shall go distracted, if I think of it, and I can think of nothing else. I see you presiding in his family, gracing his house, and, by inhabiting it, averting the just arm of vengeance raised to strike him.

‘ Does the villain—that my Constance’s husband should ever be called a villain !—does he be have with the respect due to you ? is he still vicious and abandoned ? or is he reclaimed by your misery ? I believe he loves you ; but with a species of affection which is insulting : he is a wretch, lost
to

to all that sense which raises love above brutish ardour ; and he is rendered ten thousand times more criminal, by having extinguished that lamp which was placed in his breast, and which would have shone with superior brightness : for his vices are all acquired, and he had virtues, which he has as diligently rooted out, as others would have cultivated. I knew him a different creature, though always tending towards what he has now arrived at.—But why should I paint him to you in odious colours ?—you already are too well acquainted with him.—I will cease writing—I sat down calmly—when I think of you, I lose my senses.

‘ What I have written above seems to contradict what I am now determined to say to you. I intended to have told you I submitted patiently to our fate, and find I have been betrayed into the contemplation of my misfortunes. I own I cannot yet bear it, but I hope I shall soon be able to look steadfastly at them.

‘ The bed of sickness has been my school, pain my friendly monitor, and I have learnt that as the Almighty will not inflict more than he will give strength to support, I must not desert his service.—I submit to his decree, and if *I do*, who may not ?—I acknowledge the right of him who created the world to dispense or withhold it’s blessings : I see his power, I feel his mercy, which, in the loss of every thing I held valuable, has still sustained me, and points towards an immortality where we, my

ever dear Constance, may meet, may be happy beyond the reach of misfortune.

‘ It is this prospect that animates me and gives me strength to tell you that I will submit without murmuring to any calamities I may suffer:—greater than I have already experienced, I was going to say, cannot reach me:—I have nothing but my life to lose,—would God accept it?—Shall I endeavour to persuade you to rest satisfied? Yes, I will.—I know you will say any evil would have been preferable to that of marrying the man you hated: I cannot deny this; but yet, we never could have been happy; for however my father’s conduct might extenuate any breach of duty, I was acting in positive defiance of him, and your fine feelings could not have endured his anger.

‘ While I live, my affection cannot be diverted from you, and it will survive me:—you are my wife, notwithstanding your marriage:—his you cannot be; you are mine by prior right, and I will never never quit my claim.

‘ My recovery would, I suppose be complete if it were not opposed by the dejection of my spirits and retarded by the air of this place, which is a disease of itself to my constitution; but I think reluctantly of quitting the garrison: it is a scene of confusion, noise, and horror very well suited to me, and I would stay here did not the Governor insist on my returning to my native country.—Thither I come;

come ; but how to support the idea of living in the same kingdom with you, I know not :—time will perhaps teach me.

‘ I have desired Mr. Gaynham and Harriet to meet me at Portsmouth in three weeks after the receipt of the letters I send now, and must then come on to London.—I hope you will be absent from it ; if you are not, need I beg you to avoid me ?—notwithstanding all my resolution, Great God defend me, were I to see you with your husband, the consequences might be such as I should repent for ever. I shall, you may be assured, carefully shun you, and should we unfortunately meet, be it where it will, I shall immediately quit the place ; for your sake, I will not excite his jealousy.

‘ If any intercourse subsists between my sister and you, which I should not doubt but for the hatred she must bear to your tyrant, I wish you would let her know, when you at any time change your place of residence, as I could then keep at a distance from you.—O Heaven ! that I should desire to be at a distance from you !—it must be, and I must submit.

‘ I cannot say, forget me wholly ; but do, as far as is necessary to your peace : endeavour to derive comfort from the blessings left you : yet what are they ? riches and splendour ?—they are empty sounds, and enhance misery.—No, my Constance, these are not all ; you have the approbation of your
heart

heart to console you, and in that possess a treasure, of which even the villainy you are sacrificed to cannot deprive you,

‘ I have written till I can only add my best wishes for you, and the assurance that I honour you for the virtues you have discovered even by this injury to me.—There is nothing within my view that I can reasonably wish, excepting that my father might once say that he had used me hardly : this would be, with respect to him, compensation : I do not ask a shilling from him : let him deprive me of my patrimony, but not of his blessing.

‘ Adieu, I shall ramble till I lose myself and contradict all I have advanced.

‘ It is needless to subscribe myself

‘ your most devoted

‘ C A L O R N E .’

CHAP

CHAP. XXV.

BANTER.

THE feelings of the two ladies now shewed themselves differently: Miss Fitzarthur's produced a silent thoughtfulness, a placid serenity, and smiles which beamed on her countenance, while the tears started and retreated from her eyes: Lady Harriet could not rest two minutes in a place: she paced backward and forward, talking to herself: stopping, suddenly catching Constance's hand, reiterating,—
‘O brother!—what would I not give to have you here! how delighted you will be to see her.

Recurring after contemplation to her particular circumstances, Constance asked Mr. Gaynham if he saw any necessity for her postponing till the morning to send her final answer to Lord Farnford. —That depends, he replied,—on the purport of your answer: you talked of going to him, and surrendering yourself: if you still think that eligible, I advise your waiting till the morning, lest you should do him harm by your news, for I imagine he will be

pretty much elated.—How can you trifle with me, said Constance, smiling at his gravely supposing what he knew to be impossible : I was ignorant of the happiness in store for me, when I made that resolution, and having despaired of comfort for myself, fought it for him : I need not tell you what answer I shall send, but I wish to do it in as gentle a manner as I can : I scorn to insult him, and would be particularly cautious to avoid whatever looks like saucy triumph : advise me then how I shall act.

Why then seriously, replied Mr. Gaynham, you had better leave the matter to me : I will see your Ladyship's quondam husband to-morrow, and tell him what you determine on.—Why not to-night ? she rejoined ; the sooner he knows it, the sooner his suspense will be relieved.—Not so fast, good Lady, said Mr. Gaynham : I am sure we should keep him awake all night, by depriving him of his hopes so suddenly, and his fever would probably return ; for, to tell you the truth, he has not yet heard, nor till he has your final resolution, must he hear of my brother's being alive : it would be dangerous to let him know you are disposed of : in the morning he shall be let into the secret, and perhaps he will want to see you ; but do not you be prevailed on.

A natural curiosity arose in Constance's mind, to know how Mr. Gaynham had so suddenly and so opportunely got possession of facts thus important to her, which he satisfied by telling her, that he was awaked in the morning by the arrival of

the letters he had shewn her, that he had sent for Lady Harriet, to meet him at her father's, in order to communicate the intelligence; that Lord Ormington was seized with a fit while they were standing by him, and just as he had heard his son was alive, and that during the short continuance of life and reason, he expressed his sorrow for his conduct to Lord Calorne, confessed himself justly punished in not being permitted to see him, and forgave Lady Harriet. Mr. Gaynham, said he then, after having taken his wife home, came to Portman-square, that he might by degrees acquaint Constance with the information he had received; but finding Lord Farnford's house such a scene of confusion, and hearing from Mr. Carwell how much more interesting than he expected his news would prove, they agreed on the necessity of all possible caution, and of acting as they had done.

The remainder of the evening was fully occupied in consulting on the steps to be taken in the several affairs in agitation; after which Constance took leave of her friends, enjoying those sensations which 'awaken, not disturb the soul,' and closed a day, which began very inauspiciously, with gratitude for the blessings it had produced.

She was composed, but she could not sleep: she anticipated in imagination the arrival which was to terminate all her anxiety, and a tincture of regret now and then intervened, that she could in no way reward Lord Farnford's generous relinquishment:

she could not entirely surmount her fears, that so total a disappointment would prove a discouragement of his good intentions; and that, if virtue was so niggardly, he would again enlist under the standard of vice: but neither these apprehensions, nor Lord Ormington's death, were of sufficient weight to counterbalance in any degree the joy she felt. Lord Calorne's happiness had long been the wish of her heart: to this all inferior circumstances must yield; the smallness of Lord Farnford's pretensions, even in his reformed state, to any uncommon extension of felicity, was not to be denied, and Lord Ormington's conduct had not very much conciliated her affection.

Mr. Gaynham went in the forenoon of the next day to Portman-square, and was the bearer of a mollifying message, as well as of Constance's ring, which she had ceased to wear from the moment when she determined to restore it: she enjoined her ambassador to assure Lord Farnford of her good wishes for him, and of her gratitude for his kindness; to exhort him to recall Charlotte Lyfcot, that he might erase all former painful remembrances by making her, and declaring her his wife; and to intreat him to be reconciled to Lady Emma Peryton. The whole of this commission Mr. Gaynham punctually discharged; he brought her a formal release from his Lordship, written and signed, a promise that every part of her request should be complied with, and congratulations on an event which her now tempe-
rate

rate lover prevailed on himself to say he rejoiced in.—He had anticipated a hint of the efficacy of absence in his case, by telling Mr. Gaynham, he purposed sending immediately for Charlotte Lyfscot, marrying her publicly, and then retiring with her for a year to his house at Piſtbourne, that he might detach himself from his former connections, and give his good resolutions time to strengthen: after this, if he did not find himself entirely cured of his passion, he said he should go abroad with his wife, and leave nothing undone that could testify his sense of the injury he had done her and her family, and his sorrow for the life he had led. He seemed very willing to give up all the pleasures he had so eagerly pursued, and though his enlightened mind shewed him that flight was not victory, as he saw the former necessary to the latter, he resolved to use it as the means of this desirable end, and not to see Miss Fitzarthur till he was certain she was become indifferent to him: his health had continued mending; and at parting he requested Mr. Gaynham, to be present when he married Charlotte, which, as her brother would set out for France at a few hours notice, he hoped would be in the course of ten days.

It was no trifling addition to Constance's enjoyment to find that he who had so essentially, however fortuitously contributed to it, would not be made wholly unhappy: singularity in felicity was a solecism in her idea, she was convinced it was ever

increased by communication, and that the greater number of portions it was divided into, the larger was each one's share.

Mr. Gaynham having given all necessary directions respecting the deceased Earl's funeral, and being able to do little towards settling his affairs till his son's arrival, proposed a return to Oatham, as it would be beneficial to Constance's health, and keep her out of Lord Farnford's reach, in case he should relax of his steadiness ; to this, all interested in it readily consented, and orders were given for their departure the next day.

In the evening, Mr. Carwell came to Burlington-street, to join his congratulations and good wishes to those of Constance's other friends : she begged and obtained his forgiveness of her unjust anger, and all her doubts respecting Lord Farnford were prevented, by an account of his penitent acquiescence in what had been proposed, and of his having already sent for Miss Lycot.

The good which Mr. Carwell derived from this new connection, he attributed solely to Constance, who on her part, thought the weight of obligation so preponderated with her, as to annihilate all she could, even in imagination, have conferred : she learnt with infinite satisfaction, that Mr. Carwell was to quit Lord George Brenville's family, to remain in London no longer than to discharge himself of the affairs committed to his management, and

and then to fetch his wife out of Scotland : Lord Farnford having so rewarded him, as enabled him to reside in England.

Some little difficulty arose in conversation about the method of gratifying Lord Calorne in his wish that Mr. Gaynham and Lady Harriet should meet him at Portsmouth, as Constance did not chuse to accompany them, and must therefore be left alone : her objections to going were allowed admissable ; for, though she confessed her impatience to see him she expected, she could not overcome the notion of indelicacy in waiting at a sea-port town the arrival of her lover, especially as he did not purpose meeting her in that character. It was therefore agreed, that she should accept an invitation Mrs. Aistrey had in every letter repeated, and remain with her during the absence of her friends.

C H A P. XXVI.

R E P E N T A N C E.

WITH sensations very different from those with which she quitted Oatham, she returned to it, and now all her and her friend's endeavours were directed to remove the consequences of her afflictions : this was facilitated by the prospect before her, which presenting to her view all she could rationally wish in the world, filled her mind with ineffable joy and gratitude, and a few days exhibited her character in a light which, since her first leaving Marstonbury, it had rarely been seen in.

One week of expectation was elapsed, when Lord Farnford wrote to Mr. Gaynham, requesting to see him at Mount Felix on the day next but one following, when he intended in the face of the world to marry Miss Lycot : he hinted a wish that he might afterwards be permitted to visit Constance ; but she, sorry to find him so inclined to
start

start aside from his intended course, shook her head, at hearing it, and said it must not be.

On the day named, Mr. Gaynham went to Mount Felix, and returning in the evening, gave Lady Harriet and Constance such an account of Lord Farnford's conversation, of his behaviour to Charlotte, who was brought from her father's in the morning, and of his expressions of sorrow for his conduct to Miss Fitzarthur, as removed the very defensible hatred of her, who, for her brother's sake, abhorred him, and drew the sincerest pity, forgiveness, and even esteem, from her who had so long dreaded him.

To make his atonement more public than his transgression, he was married in the parish church, and had signified that every mark of respect shewn to his wife, would be an obligation on him, intimating that he should resent any reflection cast on her. He begged Mr. Gaynham to assure Constance, that he felt no reluctance to this submission, and that nothing was wanting to complete it, but her being finally disposed of, after which he said he would strive to wean his thoughts entirely from her, till his passion was cooled into friendship, and would cultivate his revived love for Charlotte with the utmost assiduity,

As he found it most prudent to retire from every place where he had seen Constance, he had written and given to Mr. Gaynham's custody the following

letter for Lord Calorne, which, that Miss Fitzarthur might know his sentiments, he had forborn to seal.

‘ My Lord,

‘ The enormities I have been guilty of towards you have almost excluded me from the right of addressing you, and I am apprehensive that my presumption in asking your pardon will make you refuse it : yet, that I should address you, that I should ask it, that I should acknowledge and explain many of the indignities you have suffered, is so indispensibly necessary to your satisfaction and my peace, that I cannot remain silent ; but must risque whatever censure you may pass on my audacity.

‘ I wish you and Miss Fitzarthur to know what share each of those who have contributed to your distresses had in the various schemes I concerted for my success : the whole load of guilt I take on myself ; it is not my intention to palliate any circumstance, or to screen myself, nor would I confess that I had any abettors, could I not plainly prove that they acted under my influence.

‘ That love was my motive, I need not tell you ; that it was, though unjustifiable, sincere, my actions have too well evinced, and that even it’s sincerity was criminal, I ought long ago to have perceived : indeed I did perceive it ; I cannot plead
ig-

ignorance ; I will not use disguise ; I have always opposed the light of conscience, I have been deaf to it's reiterated calls, and was determined at any price to purchase what I sought.

‘ Having heard much of Sir Edward Fitzarthur's daughter, and that she was to come to London with her aunt, I prevailed on Mrs. Stavenell to agree to our meeting and travelling together, in order that I might indulge my curiosity : my truly kind sister Maria dissuaded me from this, warning me that I was, at least, seeking sources of uneasiness, as, from the account given of her, I was so anxious to see, she was assured I could not be long indifferent to her, and, as her engagement to Lord Reycolm rendered all hopes unreasonable, I pretended to be convinced I could withstand whatever might be the effect of an interview, and I persisted in my resolution.

‘ At this time I was under a promise to marry Miss Lycot, a consideration that ought to have deterred me, but I was not to be deterred ; and, regardless of all Maria's cautions, remonstrances, and intreaties, notwithstanding I saw she had a foreboding of the consequence, and that it made her unhappy, I went to Mrs. Stavenell's, and my temerity was punished. I behaved during the first day so as to embarrass and disgust Miss Fitzarthur, and I soon found all deficiency in experience so amply supplied by good sense, as to deprive me of every expectation of winning her by common methods.

‘ What I felt, I deserved : but it was intolerable : I intrusted Mrs. Stavenell, who has always been too cruelly kind to me, with my incipient passion ; I made her believe Lord Reycoln my only opponent ; I represented to her the advantage which my fortune gave me, and how beneficial a match it would be for her niece, and I wrought on her to pity me ; but I could not induce her to aid me efficiently ; the most she would consent to was that, as I said my having access to Miss Fitzarthur was the only condition on which I would keep my love for her a secret, I should be allowed to see her and to try what assiduity would do : this failed ; I employed my younger sister to plead for me, and with no better success.

‘ Before Lord Reycoln came over, I was too well persuaded that I had other difficulties to encounter : Miss Fitzarthur manifested an aversion to me which damped my joy at hearing she was disengaged : I saw that I should ruin my hopes by avowing them to her, and therefore, enjoining Mrs. Stavenell to keep her from Lady Maria during my absence, I went to Sir Edward, and with ease obtained his consent and support. I now undervalued his daughter’s willing acquiescence, and pleased myself with thinking it beyond a doubt that she would submit to his choice ; but here I was disappointed : Miss Fitzarthur knew very well what duty required of her, and aware that I had imposed

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on her father, repulsed me : she wrote to him, and so did I by the same post : I succeeded so far as to prevail with him to exert his authority and command her obedience ; but she conquered, and he prohibited my solicitation, in such terms as shewed that, though he regretted his daughter's inflexibility, he would resent my importuning her.

' I was now firmly of opinion that you was my rival, for my natural vanity made me think it impossible she could refuse me without a prepossession : and I told her so : she assured me I was mistaken, and condescending to say, upon her honour, that you had never declared yourself, I was forced to believe that she rejected me for my own sake, and I grew desperate. Soon after, I heard how she had been affected by seeing you thrown from your horse, and I then was convinced that you were the impediment to my wishes, though you did not know that you was so highly favoured. I wrote to her in the heat of disappointment and rage, and, my pride aiding me, I determined to cease the pursuit : but, while we were at enmity, I found it so difficult to suppress my love, I was so much hurt at seeing Mrs. Stavenell come to my house alone, I was so sorry for my offence, and so completely wretched, that I employed Maria to intercede for me : on a promise that I would behave with discretion, and that I would not resent the attachment which began to be visible between you and

Miss

Miss Fitzarthur, my sister undertook the office, and we were reconciled.

‘ All my hopes being now at an end, I endeavoured to rest satisfied with the portion of her favour which I enjoyed ; but my exertions were too weak : I was unhappy, and I had no prospect of being otherwise, for I need not tell you that Miss Fitzarthur’s friendship, even if the whole of it had been bestowed on me, would not have contented me. At the time when I thought I must of necessity cede to you, I heard from Metward, that Lord Ormington was entangled by an application from Mr. Ecklow, which was too advantageous to be disregarded, but which a consent he had given to your addressing Miss Fitzarthur, opposed : the first hint that your father wished to retract, presented success to my view : I went to him, and consulted with him on the means of detaching you from Miss Fitzarthur. I knew there was nothing to be done while you continued to think well of each other ; and therefore, having learnt of Lady Emma some particulars of a conversation she had overheard between you, I accepted a proposition of her’s to write three letters as from Miss Fitzarthur to you ; two of them containing assignments, which we contrived she should keep, the third reproaching you with cruelty and neglect : these, I was certain, would disgust you, and in the mean time I advised Lord Ormington’s alarming her, and making her suspect you.

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‘ The hazard I ran in this part of my operations, was such as kept me in continual terror : on its success mine wholly depended, and I dreaded your meeting Miss Fitzarthur, lest you should tax her with what you thought she had done, and thus become friends again ; had you done so, you had entirely defeated my scheme.

• As it was not my intention to serve your father only, I waited for Miss Fitzarthur’s cooling towards you, which I soon perceived she did ; and, grown confident, I fancied that, out of revenge to you, she would accept me, if I did not mar my project, by being too urgent ; but a more immediate opportunity of securing her, presented itself, and I seized it. I called one evening at Mrs. Stavenell’s, and heard from her that her niece purposed a sudden return to Marstonbury : of this I availed myself, by pretending that I was going to Farnford with my sisters, and I persuaded her to accompany us ; of the transactions of the journey, you are well informed.

• Soon after this, I heard of Sir Edward’s death : I instantly wrote to his daughter, not supplicating, but demanding her ; and to this the answer I received, was a refusal from Lady Barbara : it did not quite dispirit me : I confess I hoped Miss Fitzarthur was friendless, and, having lost my sister Maria, I had no restraint : I learnt that Miss Fitzarthur was in town, and therefore went thither :
but

but before my inquires to find her were successful, I accidentally met with her at Mrs. Stavenell's.

‘ Of knowing my intention, when I undertook the charge of her, Mrs. Stavenell must be acquitted : nobody was privy to this scheme, and she did all in her power to prevent an interview afterwards, by positively refusing to tell me with whom Miss Fitzarthur was in London.

‘ Fortunately for me, the daughter of the gentleman at whose house she was, came to fetch her from Mrs. Stavenell's, in the evening of the day on which I met her there ; and an invitation was given me to Mrs. Aistrey's in Bedford-row : there I presently discovered I had no chance of carrying my point ; Miss Fitzarthur had the protection she needed, and could at any time banish me : I tried the effect of a letter to Mrs. Aistrey, but it did not succeed. I therefore only improved opportunities of seeing her, by endeavouring to inspire her with confidence in me ; till an accident, with which, I presume, you are acquainted, occasioning her to remove thence, I set out on a new plan, and determined not to fail for want of circumspection : any alarm from me, I supposed, would drive her from London, for which reason I kept at a distance, and wished her to be convinced that I had given up the chase before I made another effort.

‘ The next engine I employed was Lady George Brenville, who knew the person with whom Miss Fitz-

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Fitzarthur lodged: I told her my situation, my hopes, my views, and my anxiety for her recovery from a very dangerous fever, with which I learnt she was then struggling: Lady George engaged to serve me, and making an intimacy with her, under the appearance of friendship, invited her to be her guest. I wished the world to know, that I was to marry Miss Fitzarthur, because I thought the notoriety of my passion might be an inducement with her; but it was my policy to keep her in ignorance of my resolution to obtain her by some means or other, till I had secured myself against disappointment: for these reasons, I told my acquaintance that I was to have her, at the same time enjoining them not to let her hear I had mentioned it: she was sometimes disconcerted, by the notice this attracted: but as she could not find out whence it arose, I thought my difficulties abated, and that when she was convinced that our re-marriage was the public expectation, she would not have courage to refuse me.

‘ With this opinion I could not long flatter myself: it was apparent that I gained no ground, that her spirit was neither to be bowed by misfortune, nor warped by solicitation, and that she was not to be so terrified to my purpose. I then vowed she should be mine by force, and prevailed on Lord and Lady George Breville to aid me in compelling her. The method we agreed on was, that I should meet her at Lord George’s in the country, where
Mr.

Mr. Carwell undertook to read the service, provided this was all he was required to do, and I was satisfied, as I have always been, till experience taught me the contrary, that Miss Fitzarthur would soon be reconciled to our connection, when she saw herself in an irremediable situation: this scheme, you undoubtedly know, was defeated by Mr. Carwell, though apparently by another circumstance, which she assigned to Lady George, as a reason for breaking with her, and leaving her.

‘ It was not till by chance I saw Miss Fitzarthur coming out of a house in Conduit-street, that I could afterwards trace her. I was there informed that she was called Miss Constance, and I was provoked at this disguise, because I knew it was assumed to screen herself from me; but I had then no remedy; and shortly after hearing you had met with her, and were to be married immediately, I gave up all expectations.

‘ To your letter, requiring me to ask her pardon, I had written a challenge in answer, trusting to the hope, that I might, at least, remove either you or myself: from this Metward dissuaded me; advising me rather to comply, and to exert my powers for the purpose of circumventing you: I readily consented, and chose the following means for it:

‘ I bribed one of Mrs. Gaynham’s servants to quit her and come to me, and, as he had frequently car-

carried messages to Burlington-street, I sent one by him, as from his former Mistress, desiring to see Miss Fitzarthur: this succeeded, and, with a degree of rapture which aggravates my sins, I saw the object of my wishes once more in my power: it was my resolution to marry her, even should it be as much as ever against her will, and then without delay to take her to the country, or, in case her friends should be very much incensed, into France; but I found her, as I might have expected, so immoveably firm, that, without the hazard of driving her mad, I could not persist: I therefore submitted to wait, confident that it was impossible she could escape me.

‘ I had been told that Lord Ormington opposed your marrying her as strenuously as before she quitted London, and insisted on your accepting Miss Ecklow, who herself had given out that she was to be your wife, though in such terms as I have since recollected, bore two constructions, and I hoped, however incredible, that you had been wrought on to deceive Miss Fitzarthur.—The morning after I had decoyed her to my house, your wedding was, to my inexpressible joy, and almost equal surprize, announced in the Herald, and readily believed what it was my interest should be true, I engaged to prove it: this I did, not only to Miss Fitzarthur’s satisfaction, but really to my own, a compact having been concluded between us that, if I substantiated the charge

charge, she should yield, if I failed, that I should restore her to her friends, I claimed her compliance and, after much difficulty, persuading, intimidating, promising, and threatening that which I never was so abandoned as to intend executing, I compelled her to say she would marry me. To such extremity had I driven her by terrifying her with the idea of being carried to Mount Felix, that in unutterable grief, with tears that would have turned obduracy to compassion, and on her knees, she collected the whole force of lovely wretchedness to move me, I was moved, but not to forego a victory which was now mine : I consented to her remaining in town, on condition of her acquiescence, and that she should afterwards maintain herself to be my wife, in order to shield me from a prosecution.

‘ My own impatience defeated my view, and to it I am indebted for the ability to renounce Miss Fitzarthur : Metward was out of the way when I had brought her to compliance, and, fearful that she should retract, I made my steward officiate in his stead, well assured that I should find it easy, on pretence of other informality, to persuade her to a re-marriage ; for, however heinous my sins, I solemnly protest I never entertained a wish to secure to myself the liberty of deserting her ; my love for her was not so criminal in it's species as in the degree of it ; to be her husband was the felicity I aimed at, and I thought myself gratified. I married

ried her :—thank Heaven, illegally :—all my care now appeared over, when in truth it was commencing.

‘ I soon had reason to repent what I had done : though in her own opinion my wife, she was unchanged, and I depended on time and despair alone for any portion of the happiness for which I had sacrificed every thing.—As I had secured her, and lest I should impel her to some act of violence, I yielded to her refusal to see me, and determined to use lenient measures.—At the beginning of the next day she desired to go to your sister, and I permitted it, being morally certain that, as you had deceived her, she would return home, if not more mine, less your’s ; but her stay rendering me suspicious and uneasy, I went to fetch her, and on entering the room at Mr. Gaynham’s, instantly perceived that my information respecting Miss Ecklow must be erroneous. I had then no resource but supporting my claim, and this at any rate I resolved to do.

‘ There is, I believe, hardly any other circumstance of this infamous business, that requires explanation : you know what she suffered in consequence of the force she had submitted to, and how I was brought to my senses. I have nothing to plead in justification or excuse, nor can I derive comfort from any reflection, excepting that all my views were disappointed : instead of our intimacy increasing, after we were married, the distance became greater between us : I was obliged to ask her
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permission to see her, and even when that was obtained, and she had so far conquered herself as to admit my visits voluntarily, her deportment and looks inspired me with such awe, that I often felt it difficult to address her. I was forced to make concessions which I had resolved against, her power over me was absolute, and such a change had she wrought in me, that at the time when she set off for Oatham, I could rather have consented to her being separated from me for ever, than have done any thing to disoblige her. She candidly accepted my vows of reformation; she generously told me, if I would be kind to her, she would not reproach me; and it became the purpose of my heart to accommodate the remainder of my life to her notions of rectitude.

‘ My situation, when I parted from her to meet Lord George Breville, I am sure you will pity: no torture ever equalled what I underwent, but I merited it, and infinitely more. I had a cowardly presentiment, that I should not survive, and I had no consolation to look to: I saw eternity before me: I saw my sins recorded, and I could not exclude horror.

‘ The intervention of Supreme Mercy, has rescued me from the misery that awaited me then, and I rejoice in my present state of wretchedness.— I trust you have nothing now to fear from me; but, if you are not perfectly satisfied, I pledge myself to conform to whatever your security demands. I

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am, to-morrow morning, to make all the atonement in my power to injured innocence, by marrying Charlotte Lyfscot, which, from my heart, I most willingly do : yet I will not impose on you ; I still love Miss Fitzarthur as ardently as ever, though less madly : esteem, respect, gratitude, the sincerest pity for her, and abhorrence of myself, are the sensations excited at this moment in my breast ; and, in my present temper of mind, I would sooner kill myself than distress her.

‘ It is as impossible for me to acknowledge the obligations I am under to her charity, as to annihilate the crimes I have been guilty of : what I suffered from my rencontre with Lord George, was mitigated much by her assiduity : she impaired her health by attending me ; and she prayed for my life, when she must have wished I had never been born. I pretend to no merit in my renunciation of her, and can only hope that the conflict I endured at the time, will be accepted as a part of my punishment : but for Mr. Carwell I could not have borne it : he insisted on it, he convinced me that it was indispensably required, and I submitted to it, that I might avoid a repetition of the agonies I had suffered.

‘ I intend retiring from whatever can recall Miss Fitzarthur to my remembrance ; and, could I find an expression that would convince you of my sincerity, I would assure you, that I will omit nothing that can eradicate this unfortunate passion which has produced torment greater than you can
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imagine, and no other gratification than that of receiving her, to whom from excess of love I was cruel, in my arms, when she fainted at hearing herself pronounced my wife, and that of having softened her to pity when it was too late to improve her favourable disposition.

‘ You, Lord Calorne, have a mind above rejoicing at my defeat : you will feel for the villain you execrate : I do not deserve compassion. I wish I could make you any reparation for the many wretched hours I have occasioned you, and for the accumulated violence and indignities I have offered to you, through her whom I knew to be wholly your’s ; but sorrow and repentance is the utmost of my ability. I have no haughtiness left ; thank Heaven, my spirit is broken, and that which till now I should have called mean submission, is more than I can pretend a title to. I implore your pardon ; I would ask it personally, but I must fly from Miss Fitzarthur, and if possible, from myself.

‘ I leave you in the enjoyment of all that this world can bestow : peace of mind, bounded desires, and the possession of Miss Fitzarthur, to whose love for you I can bear testimony, as I am ashamed to say, I can to her tried virtues ; you are happy, you deserve to be so : I am miserable, and equally merit it : my time must be spent in penitence and contrition, and he alone who has called me from a life of sin, can tell whether my repentance can ever be rendered acceptable.

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‘ I honour you for your conduct, and am I hope sincere in wishing the continuance and improvement of your felicity : I am sure, could I any way promote it I should feel pleasure in doing it ; but do not trust me ; my resolutions are feeble, though good ; and, that you may guard against me, I will own that were Miss Fitzarthur to say, pity for the man she has regarded as her husband, counterbalanced her affection for you, I should again be unjust and you unhappy.

‘ I have the honour to be,

‘ With the utmost respect,

‘ Your most obedient humble servant

‘ FARNFORD.’

C H A P. XXVII.

EXPECTATION.

HIS Lordship’s distrust of himself was a proof of his sincerity and a sure prognostic of his conquest over his greatest enemy, his own temper : he had been minute in fulfilling every junction laid on him, and had offered the olive branch to Lady Emma,

Emma, who, by rejecting it, corroborated the observation that no affection, not even that which is the offspring of consanguinity, can be permanent where there is not a basis of friendship.

His love, being now guided into a proper channel, made him anxious to contribute to Miss Fitz-arthur's happiness and ease : he therefore wished to explain to her relations and friends the whole of his conduct, that not even the shadow of imputation might rest on her spotless fame ; and commissioned Mr. Gaynam to procure from her the names of those whom her regard entitled to satisfaction.

Constance had devoted her first intervals of leisure to writing to Lord Reycoln, whom she knew her deliverance would rejoice, and telling him Lord Calorne was coming home, she left him to draw what he thought the most natural inference ; to Mrs. Aistrey, relating her various transitions, and inquiring whether she might with convenience become again her guest ; and, that she might be ascertained of her expectations, to Lord Drumferne. Fearing that the defeat of Mrs. Stavenell's labours for Lord Farnford should renew the family breach, she did not omit addressing her : and in pacific terms begged that hereafter no mention might be made, nor any remembrance retained, of the disagreeable events of the last twenty months ; this offered act of oblivion was soon answered by acceptance, and Mrs. Stavenell now rejoiced with her niece, from a motive of

opposition to her former favourite, of whose ingratitude she vehemently complained, and whose defection from her had produced a resolution in her mind, that *as long as she lived she would never strive to please any body again.*

The return to her queries respecting her affairs at Marstonbury was this: that at Christmas the house would be untenanted, that, as the navigation was nearly completed, she might sell the estate to considerable advantage, or, if she chose to keep it, timber might, in the course of a few years, be felled, sufficient to pay off the mortgage.

The conclusion from these premises was, that, should the now Earl of Ormington arrive safe, and resume his hitherto defeated intention of marrying Miss Fitzarthur, he would have with her a net income of 1800*l.* a year, and an estate which might be improved to as much more.—With regard to herself, Constance had no value for riches; but she was much pleased with thus having it in her power to make such an addition to Lord Ormington's revenue as was suitable to his rank: she deferred resolving on any thing till she had his concurrence, excepting that, unless it was his wish, Marstonbury should not be sold, or be the residence of any family but his.

There was, beside this intelligence, a paragraph in her uncle's letter, which gave her pleasure equal to the report of her wealth: the incumbent of the living of Marstonbury, had been promoted, and

meant to resign it; as Sir Edward Fitzarthur had purchased the advowson, his heirs had the right of presentation; and having learnt of Mr. Gaynham that her intention was practicable, she resolved to testify her gratitude to Mr. Carwell, by giving it to him, as it was well worth his acceptance, and would obviate all the regret she felt, at his being placed so far from her.

She communicated whatever related to her fortune to Mr. Gaynham, and took his advice on every step: when she told him to what her expectations amounted, he hinted the prudence of withholding the information, for a little time, from his brother, lest the joy of finding her should, of itself, be as much as he could bear, without injuring his health: she coincided in this opinion, and was delighted with the thought of reserving something to add to his happiness.

Mrs. Aistrey, having received, as she wished, her offer of a visit, but advising, as Lord Ormington's affairs must carry him first to London, that their meeting should be at her house in Bedford-row, for which purpose she had on the day after the receipt of her letter, quitted the country, Constance took leave of Lady Harriet two days before her Ladyship was to set out, and, accompanied by Mr. Gaynham, returned to a house whence she had been unjustly exiled.

But the welcome she met with was such as obliterated all sense of what she had suffered there.—

Mrs.

Mrs. Aitrey's joy was, as her friendship had uniformly been, maternal, and she seemed to think the preference Miss Fitzarthur gave to her house, an obligation. All that could testify affection, all that could recompence former hardships, in inflicting which she had really had no share, and all that could beguile the time of expectation, she exerted herself to do: and Constance, notwithstanding her anxiety, found the days pass agreeably. As she could not hope for any previous warning of Lord Ormington's arrival, because he could travel faster than the post, her kind friend was frequent in her exhortations to her, to be prepared and cautious against being too sanguine: her admonitions made Constance keep a constant guard over herself, and she suffered patiently many disappointments, if a carriage came to the house, or went along the street faster than the usual pace.

Mr. Carwell, who still remained in town, visited her often; and at noon, on the sixth day after she came to Mrs. Aitrey, just as he had called in, Lady Harriet Gaynham was announced. Constance's colour rose; she met her as she entered, and before she could ask why she came alone, with a countenance that banished all fear, she bid her not be alarmed, for Mr. Gaynham would soon be with her: her Ladyship then relieved the curiosity which all present participated, by saying Lord Ormington was arrived safe and well, and that he was determined to deliver his dispatches, but would dine with them.

Constance's agitation at this moment, in some measure, reconciled her to the delay : for she was convinced her bravery was not, as she had thought it, proof against every shock, and that to behave as she wished on such an occasion, was not so much in her power as she had believed : her eyes sparkled at the account Lady Harriet gave of her brother's reception of the news : she learnt that he was, when he first came on shore, extremely dejected, having heard of his father's death, from some officers who came on board the vessel before he could land, but not of his recantation : her Ladyship said she had the felicity of imparting whatever could give him pleasure, and claimed commendation for her dexterity, as it had produced no ill effect.—And, continued she, addressing herself to Constance, if there is the least particle of your affection unappropriated, I demand it for him : for your peaceable spirit would have adored him ; he seemed to think that happiness so much above the lot of humanity, required him to divest himself of all human prejudices, and he uttered no sentiment but implied gratitude for these blessings, love for our dear Miss Fitzarthur, and the most generous forgiveness of Lord Farnford.

A recital of circumstances so interesting, was as much as she, whom they most concerned, could bear : her heart palpitated at the approaching conclusion of her troubles, and the commencement of an improved state of happiness ; and she retired to

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contemplate the scene, while she felt the most lively gratitude to the Great First Cause, who had made the extremity of her misfortunes give the highest zest to her felicity.

Mrs Aistrey too well knew the necessity of animating her to let her remain alone : she soon fetched her back, and preached on the text of moderation, while Constance received her endeavours as tokens of her friendship, and was persuaded they were needless : she assured her she could now bear any degree of joy.—For, said she, after what I have gone through, so often as my hopes have been raised and disappointed, I am certain it is impossible that——O Madam! I shall sink.—Lady Harriet, 'tis your coach.—God bless you do not leave me ; I cannot support myself.—Mr. Carwell came to her, and by the time the carriage stopped, she had recalled her fugitive senses, heartily angry with herself for a weakness which might deprive her of the pleasure of congratulating Lord Ormington on his return.

CHAP. XXVIII.

SURRENDER.

NOW was the moment when Constance's fortitude was to undergo it's severest test.—She had borne misfortune, she had borne suspense, hope, fear, and disappointment, in such a manner as evinced the natural strength of her mind; but whether nature had it in her power to bestow as much as so trying an occasion called for, was problematical, and the event shewed the deficiency.—Lord Ormington had the prudence and forbearance to follow Mr. Gaynham, but all caution, all exertion was inadequate to the purpose: Mr. Carwell could not hold her; she disengaged herself, and flying across the room, Lord Ormington in speechless joy caught her in his arms, where the internal commotion overcoming all her efforts, she yielded to a force she could not oppose, and resigned the use of her faculties.

Foreseeing, notwithstanding all her valiant boasting, what would be the consequence of this meeting,

meeting, her friends had the means for her recovery at hand ; but it was not easy to get her away from Lord Ormington : he seemed to forget that air was necessary to her reviving, till, after a few moments, that genuine love for her, which ever, while he was himself, predominated, made him submit, and, at the suggestion of his sister that she might again faint if she saw him as soon as she opened her eyes, he went out of the room, and staid till she inquired for him : he then returned, with an assumed degree of composure, and she could answer his request to hear from her own mouth that she was restored to him, by saying she was his whenever he thought fit to claim her.

The party spent the remainder of the day and the evening together, and it being agreed that, as Lord Ormington would be at Mr. Gaynham's, Constance should stay where she was, about midnight they separated, his Lordship having accepted Mrs. Aistrey's invitation to breakfast the next morning.

As soon as he came, she went down to him, and mutual inquiries satisfied, he urged her to determine on some arrangement of their affairs, as his business would afford him little leisure, and he must soon leave town : she professed herself ready to do whatever could contribute to his peace, but suggested the indecorum of their marrying so soon after his father's death : of this he was aware, though he did not
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seem to attend to it, and Constance, unwilling to thwart him, gave up all to his choice, requesting only that, if it were not very inconvenient, she might be married at Marstonbury. The surprize on his countenance at such a proposal made her smile, to explain it she produced and shewed to him Lord Drumferne's letter, and with a degree of pleasure beyond whatever she had hitherto experienced, she heard him say this world could not afford a desirable gratification which was not within his reach.

Nothing final was agreed on till Mrs. Aistrey came down, when Lord Ormington stated their difficulty and asked her advice: she thought with Constance, that it was decent to wait; and she thought with his Lordship, that it was a disagreeable necessity, as he must frequently be at a distance, and could hardly persuade himself to believe *Miss Fitzarthur* could be safe any where: Mrs. Aistrey therefore proposed, to accommodate both parties, and to escape equally all censure and all uneasiness, that her friend should be, as soon as possible, privately married, and that their formal wedding should be deferred till she was in possession of her house at Marstonbury: this his Lordship acceded to, and Constance consented to his procuring a special licence, to be made use of whenever he was obliged to leave London.

Mr. Carwell coming to inquire after *Miss Fitzarthur*, before Lord Ormington ended his visit, was
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intrusted with their plan, and engaged to assist it. She then told him in what manner she intended to dispose of the living of Marstonbury; and, he making no objection to the condition, which was, that he should occasionally reside there, gratefully accepted this proof of her regard.

The sudden revolution of the hood-winked goddess's wheel, had made Constance almost giddy, and when her visitors had left her, and she was sufficiently composed to regard the prospect around her, she felt herself a new creature. With every blessing she thought worthy of asking, with the hope of permanent happiness, increased by its communication to another, and a conviction that every misfortune she had experienced, had either removed some impediment to it, or refined her sensibility of it, she was anxious only to prove herself deserving of the protection she had found, and had no wish, excepting that her mother could look down on her, and be a witness of the felicity she had made her capable of enjoying.

Though Lord Ormington's time was fully occupied by public business, by his own private concerns, and by the settlement of the deceased Earl's distracted affairs, he found daily opportunity to see Constance, either at Mrs. Aistrey's or at his sister's, and she who claimed the greatest part in whatever affected him, saw with pain that, notwithstanding all his endeavours, his mind was hurt at his father's having died while he was absent, and that

though the late Lord had, by his conduct, so effectually renounced all claim to the regard which is the due of merit, that sorrow for his death could be only a natural instinct and charitable regret that a greater space had not been allowed him to retrieve the many errors of his life, the consideration that, even advanced in years, as he was, it was premature, sat heavily on Lord Ormington's spirits. Constance made him confess the cause of his dejection, and apprehensive lest his scarcely re-established health should suffer by it, exerted herself to cheer him. Her powers and situation were equal to the task of consoling him; and while his deportment was such as shewed a manly sensibility, and a far greater degree of filial attachment than so unparental a father could claim, he acknowledged this reduction of his happiness no privation of it, and that as much as mortality could hope for, still remained to him.

On the investigation of his family affairs, it was found, that the will which had disinherited him, was not executed, and that that by which he was to abide, was made on the death of his mother.—Ten thousand pounds were allotted as Lady Harriet's fortune; and Miss Greyburne and her children were separately provided for, by a deed of gift. The paternal estate, originally about 14,000*l.* a year, was, through negligence, misconduct, and a spirit of dissipation, overcharged with claims; but as the incumbrances were chiefly annuities,
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whose existence ceased with that of the granter, it was far from being irretrievable; and, on the whole, in better condition than the heir to it had expected.

A fortnight passed unheeded by, and Constance had the satisfaction of seeing Lord Ormington restored to his natural health and chearfulness: his business in London was then nearly dispatched, and as his professional duty required him to quit it, he claimed Miss Fitzarthur's performance of her promise: she readily agreed to it; Lady Harriet wished her house to be the scene, and Mrs. Aistrey accepted an invitation to dinner there with her on the day following.

That no notice might be attracted, the evening was the time chosen for the ceremony, and Lord Ormington so scrupulously adhered to his engagement, not to urge it till he was to leave town, that he would not suffer Mr. Carwell to begin the service before his carriage came to fetch him: the doors then being locked, he took Constance's hand, and fearful only lest this termination of her misfortunes should be more than her yet weak spirits could bear, with a conduct that would have taught inanity passion, and shamed libertinism, he ratified with his lips the vow engraven on his heart, and received the reward of blameless love and noble attachment.

She, though less animated, was perfectly collected: her voice was low, but her utterance was

distinct : and desirous of avoiding every appearance of reluctance, the combat between love and diffidence spread a glow over her complexion, while she purchased, at the inadequate price of willing fidelity and obedience, that protection, support, and friendship, which were to constitute the basis of her happiness.

This important event over, Constance received the gratulations of her friends ; and his Lordship, after many injunctions to her to write frequently and unreservedly, and assurances that she should hear from him by every post, set off with Mr. Carwell, who was now to begin his journey into Scotland, and who had undertaken to be at Marstonbury by the time his patroness became re-possessed of her estate.

Nothing could make this party pleasant ; but it was divested of all the pain attending fear : Lord Ormington and Constance having now an incontestible claim on each other, had no reason to dread separation, except that which precedes an union in eternity.

C H A P. XXIX.

FINALE.

REFLECTION on what she had done did not render Constance dissatisfied: she rejoiced in considering that she had, as far as depended on her, made him who in her opinion best deserved felicity, happy; and the first time she under her hand acknowledged herself his wife, she felt peculiar pleasure in being allowed to tell him without restraint that she found no equivalent for his company, no possession so valuable as his affection.

At the end of the ensuing week, Mr. Gaynham and Lady Harriet having returned to Oatham, Mrs. Aistrey was prevailed on to accompany her young friend thither: here they passed the month of November; and then Lord Ormington's regiment having taken up their winter quarters within twenty miles of her house in the country, she consulted his ease, and removed thither with Constance: a general rendezvous was settled for the first week of the new year, and Lady Harriet reluctantly suffered her sister-in-law to depart.

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In this situation, Lord Ormington could frequently be a dinner guest at Mrs. Aistrey's ; and Constance could be occasionally at Marstonbury : she went thither with Mrs. Aistrey, and felt various sensations, excited by tracing the haunts of her youth : she visited the church, and bedewed with tears the grave of her parents, indulging a wish which the rotation of her fortunes had often suggested, that they were conscious of her happiness : she saw her Pactolean river, and with gratitude to the projector, and admiration of the labour and perseverances manifested in the execution of the design, contemplated the difficulty of turning nature out of her course.

She found her intention of returning to her father's mansion, and the errand on which she would come, were known to all ; and her tenant being provided with another habitation, insisted on quitting it, that it might be prepared for her. She was received by many of Sir Edward's old servants and dependants, with the most lively tokens of welcome, and the heartiest prayers and benedictions, and she had the supreme felicity of causing many to rejoice.

An unexpected visit from Mr. Stavenell, the return of Mr. Carwell, and a letter from Lord Reycoln, signifying that he would introduce his wife and son to her before the end of January, were circumstances that added to Constance's pleasures. Mrs. Stavenell sent a very affectionate message to her niece, excusing her not being able to invite her to

Page 2, l. 19, for *was* read *slopt*, p. 12, l. 1, for *must* r. *cannot*, p. 27, l. 1, after *starting* insert *as*, p. 28, l. 14, for *these* r. *there*, p. 46, l. 13, for *shall* r. *will*, p. 63, l. 20, for *had* r. *and*, p. 68, l. 24, for *promisse* r. *promesse*, p. 86, *last* l. *eat*, *ate*, p. 105, l. 5, for *unintellible* r. *unintelligible*, p. 111, l. 6, for *of* r. *off*, p. 112, l. 18, for *impolitically* r. *imprudently*, p. 114, l. 21, after *articles* inf. *were to be*, p. 116, l. 29, before *answer* r. *only*, p. 120, l. 7, for *hear* r. *bear*, p. 121, l. 21, after *any* insert *omission*, l. 2, 3, dele *omission*, p. 123, l. 24, after *and* insert *said*, p. 126, l. 16, for *honour* r. *humour*, p. 127, l. 7, for *would* r. *could*, p. 147, l. 17, dele *wholly* and, p. 163, l. 18, for *hear* r. *heard*, p. 170, l. 18, for *but* r. *yet*, p. 172, l. 1, for *herself* r. *her*, p. 174, l. 23, for *disagreeable* r. *disrespectful* *dishonourable*, p. 177, l. 5, for *I* r. *you*, p. 188, l. 7, before *Lady* insert *in*, p. 197, l. 9, for *for* r. *but*, l. 20, after *and* insert *had*, p. 199, l. 6, after *came* insert *what* ? p. 209, l. 10, for *me* r. *one*, l. 16, for *withered* r. *wretched*, p. 212, l. 8, for ? r. ! p. 217, l. 10, *Gaynham*, *said he then*, r. *Gaynham said, he then*, l. 23, for *awaken* r. *waken*, p. 227, l. 8, for *was* r. *were*, l. 19, for *was* r. *were*, p. 231 l. 20, for *remarriage* r. *marriage*, p. 233, l. 8, for *to* r. *into*, l. 9, for *into* r. *to*, l. 25, for *believed* r. *believing*, p. 237, l. 17, for *borne* r. *born*, p. 342, l. 7, dele *so*, p. 243, l. 11, for *could* r. *would*, l. 30, for *determined* r. *detained*, p. 254, l. 12, for *perseverances* r. *perseverance*, p. 256, l. 22, for *exquisite* r. *exquisite*.



her house, by the necessity she was under of going to Bath; and Constance, who well knew what this critical change of abode meant, did not cavil at the apology.

All preliminaries being regularly adjusted, at Christmas she became the occupier of her birth-place, and in a few days Mr. Gaynham and Lady Harriet came to her: she chose the anniversary of her first quitting Marstonbury, as it was the event which had produced all her various fortunes, for the day of her public marriage; and on the appointed morning received the Earl of Ormington in the very room where Lord Calorne had been introduced to her: his Lordship's countenance had recovered the hue of health, and the exhilaration of his spirits animated it beyond what she had yet seen in him.

It was Mrs. Aistrey's counsel that her uncle should be asked to dispose of her: but he excusing himself, the office devolved on Mr. Stavenell, and she saw herself environed by those friends whose fidelity had passed the strictest test, and at the altar where her mother was married.

From her being familiarized to thinking herself Lord Ormington's wife, she hoped she should acquit herself without any embarrassment; but she was yet to become acquainted with her own heart: she felt infinitely more perturbed than she had expected; for the remembrance of her parents was so connected with the place, and the succession of her
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recollections so rapid, that notwithstanding all the encouragement and exhortation she had preparatorily received from Mr. Carwell, and in spite of all her resolution, the tears gushed from her eyes : they were indeed soon checked : a look from Lord Ormington revived her, and the fear of seeming, even for a moment, unkind to him who so highly merited every mark of her alacrity, was again revived, and continued predominant.

Her own happiness now completed, she wished to demonstrate her gratitude by extending her powers of beneficence to the utmost ; and having heard from Mr. Carwell such an account of Lord Farnford as convinced her of his good intentions, she requested Lord Ormington at his first leisure to send him his absolute forgiveness, and wrote herself to Lady Farnford : their letters were soon answered by acknowledgments, and Constance was gratified by hearing that his Lordship gained ground of all opposition to his exertions, remaining convinced that those passions, from which our most exquisite enjoyments are derived, may be perverted into sources of misery, that to controul them is equally necessary to our temporal and eternal well-being, and that Omnipotence inflicts not a severer chastisement than the indulgence of our irregular desires,

F I N I S .



